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SERMONS.

BY THE

REV. J. W. CUNNINGHAM, A. M.

VICAR OF HARROW;

DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD NORTHWICK; AND

LATE FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

In the preface to a former volume of Sermons, the author ventured to intimate an intention of preparing before long a second volume for the press. That intention he has been permitted, through the kindness of Divine Providence, to fulfil; and he accordingly now presents to the public a somewhat larger number than before of those plain and unpretending Discourses, which have been delivered in the parish where he has the happiness to reside.—In a criticism on his former volume, for which, on the whole, he has great reason to be grateful, a wish is expressed that the author would endeavour to produce a volume of a somewhat more elaborate nature. But, even if he could presume to consider himself as capable of satisfying the wishes of those who think more profoundly than the mass of society, he should exceedingly hesitate as to the lawfulness, especially in this species of composition, of

labouring to gratify the few at the expense of the many. Those sermons are evidently the best which approach the most closely to the scriptural model; and it may be confidently affirmed, that the New Testament is the simplest of all books, and the Saviour of the world the plainest of all teachers. The author has, in this view of the subject, mainly to regret his own too frequent deviations from that simplicity, the adherence to which is of such primary importance.

It is impossible that this new volume should be offered to the public, without an expression of thankfulness for the forbearance and kindness with which the former has been received; and without offering up an earnest entreaty for *His* blessing upon the work whose power is chiefly manifested in showing mercy, and in giving to the labours of his servants an efficacy, in the instruction and consolation of his church, to which they have not in themselves the smallest pretension.

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SERMON I.

ON BEING RIGHTEOUS OVER MUCH.

ECCLES. vii. 16.

Be not righteous over much.

THE term "righteousness" is usually employed in Scripture to denote a high degree of mental and moral excellence. It indicates a quality, or rather, perhaps, an assemblage of qualities, which, in perfection, can be found in God alone. "Righteous art thou, O Lord, in all thy ways:" "Thy righteousness, O God, is very high:" "Thy right hand is full of righteousness."—In the same sense, however, though in an infinitely inferior degree, the term is applied to the true and faithful servants of God on earth; as when it is said, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness," or as when the real Christian is said to be "renewed in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness."

In this sense of the word "righteousness," it is evidently impossible to need the caution conveyed by the text. It is inconceivable that a fallen creature should attain to a too perfect resemblance of the Divine perfections; that he should display, in his daily conduct and temper, too complete a transcript of the purity, justice, and love by which the dealings of God with his creatures are characterized. Whatever, therefore, may be the precise sense in which the term is em-

ployed in the text, it is obviously not that to which I have referred.—The object, however, of the present discourse, is not so much to consider the specific bearing and application of the term in the passage before us, as to endeavour to supply an answer to the two following questions:

I. To WHAT CLASSES OF PERSONS counsel of the same general character with that in THE TEXT MAY with propriety BE APPLIED; and,

II. To WHAT CHARACTERS SUCH COUNSEL IS NOT PROPERLY APPLICABLE.

I. In the first place, then, let us inquire, TO WHAT CHARACTERS, or classes of persons, such counsel as that in THE TEXT MAY with propriety BE APPLIED.

1. And, first, it is strictly applicable to those troubled with what may be termed a *scrupulous conscience*.—Men may be found, who, instead of falling into the more common offence of indifference to the laws of God, are disposed to push the cautions or prohibitions delivered in Scripture even beyond the prescribed limits. Such, probably, were some of those really devout individuals, among the sect of the Pharisees, who appear to have superadded to the requisitions of the holy law a multitude of burdensome precepts which had not the warrant of Divine authority. Such, also, were many of the class among the Jews called the Essenes, who conceived that religion demanded the most severe personal inflictions, and a retreat to the wilderness from all the active duties and comforts of life. Such self-tormenting disciples of the Cross also abounded in the early ages of Christianity. Nor are religionists of this class the produce of only one period or country. In almost every age of the Church, persons have arisen, who, misled by false opinions, or by constitutional gloom, or by corrupt teachers, or by a disposition to "establish their own righteousness," have, instead of availing themselves of the "righteous-

ness which is by faith" in a Redeemer, magnified things indifferent into matters of serious moment, fretted their minds with needless anxieties, prescribed to themselves impossible duties or observances, and have, in many instances, ended with sinking under the burden of those infirmities which cleave even to the best in the present circumstances of human nature.—Now to individuals of this spirit such counsel as that of the text may, with the strictest propriety, be applied: "Be not righteous over much;" oppress not the conscience with laws which Scripture has not prescribed: while you do homage to the holiness of God, do justice also to his compassion: "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free:" keep in memory the fact, which the Master you serve never forgets, that we are but "dust;" nor expect from fallen man an abstraction of mind and sublimation of nature, which are possible only to those emancipated and delighted spirits who surround the Throne of Glory.'

2. In the second place, such counsel as that of the text may with propriety be applied to those individuals *who, by their intense devotion to the immediate observances of religion, are betrayed into a forgetfulness of the ordinary duties of life.*—Without doubt, the study of Scripture, communion with God in prayer, in the sacraments, in meditation on his laws and promises, are the noblest, as well as the most cheering and delightful, employments of the soul; and he may confidently be proclaimed to be ignorant of real happiness, who does not often escape from the low sphere of earthly engagements and occupations, into that loftier and purer region, in which the intercourse between heaven and earth is carried on. But, still, it is to be remembered, that the same Glorious Being who has invited us to this solemn and elevating communion, has equally ordained the discharge of duties of a different class. He who has said, "Remember the Sabbath

day to keep it holy," has, in the very same commandment, recognized the obligation of an habitual attention to secular employments: "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work." He who has called us to "pray without ceasing," or to live always in the spirit of prayer, has also enjoined us to "get our own bread," to "work with our own hands," and, in short, to fulfil with earnestness every duty of our station in life. And obedience to one class of commands is no less essential than to another. Those, therefore, who expect, by an exclusive surrender of themselves to the pursuits of devotion, to attain to closer union with God, must call to mind, that, by disobedience to his will, they are depriving themselves of the very blessing and influence on which this union mainly depends. It is the pleasure of the Most High to be served according to the dictates of his own law: and his law is, that we should combine a measured attention to the ordinary business of life with the proper exercises of religion; social duties with the high occupations of piety; the employments of the field, the shop, the study, or the forum, with those of the chamber and the sanctuary. On persons, therefore, who are offending against these appointments of God, let the counsel of the text be urged again and again: 'Be not righteous over much:" give not to 'devotion the time or the thoughts due to less sublime 'and delightful occupations: combine the duties of 'earth with the duties of heaven: render to man the 'things that are man's, whilst you render to God the 'things that are God's.'

3. In the third place, the counsel of the text may with much propriety be urged on that class of persons who *may be termed*, in general language, *the superstitious*.—Under this denomination it might not, perhaps, have been improper to range that class of individuals already referred to in this discourse, namely, the *scrupulous*. But I here use the term *superstitious* in its widest sense, as referring to all those in whose religion

a sense of *fear*, a painful apprehension of the Divine Power, predominates over those other feelings and principles by which this terrifying consciousness ought to be checked and regulated. Such, for example, were possibly many of the worshippers of Baal, who are described as cutting themselves with knives; or the worshippers of Moloch, who laboured to propitiate their idol by casting themselves and their children into the fire. Such, possibly, until he had gained a clearer conception of the tenderness and compassion of the Divine character, was the individual who exclaimed, "Thy terrors have I suffered from my youth up with a troubled mind." Such, also, generally speaking, are those who substitute personal austerities for the grateful and filial services of religion; for trust in the promises of the Gospel, and faith in the atonement of the Divine Redeemer. It is, indeed, impossible not to feel the deepest compassion for men whose extravagancies are, perhaps, the effect of their very humility; but the error, whatever its source, must be met with due reprehension: and, to say nothing either of the unbelief in the promises and goodness of God which it discovers, or the misery which it occasions to the mind affected by it, how great is the injury which it inflicts upon the interests of religion! Who, if such are the consequences of coming into closer contact with the service of God—if the Christian is necessarily to become a man of a gloomy countenance and of a desolate spirit—who can be expected to embrace the Gospel? Who will be induced to seek for happiness in God, if he is to be regarded rather as a tyrant than a Father; rather as a Being prompt to revenge, than "mighty to save:" rather as delighting to kindle the fires of vengeance, than willing to extinguish those flames with the precious Blood of Atonement? On such characters, also, we may therefore justly urge the lesson of the text: "Be not righteous over much." Religion is a sentiment, not of servile dread or abject despondency, but

'of filial fear and holy love. Whilst you look at your 'sins, look also at your Redeemer: cherish towards 'the Most High the affectionate reverence of a child: 'cast all your cares and transgressions on His bosom 'who careth for you; who "has given you his own 'Son," and "therefore, with him," is ready "to give 'you all things."'

4. In the last place, the caution in the text may be usefully addressed to those who are properly termed *enthusiasts in religion*.—There is a species of religion which has its seat rather in the imagination than the judgment and conscience. There are worshippers, who, instead of consulting the word of God, and seeking the influence of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts, give the wing to fancy, and soar with her into an interdicted region, a region of clouds and of shadows. But, in adverting to the case of individuals who thus transgress, I must beg not for an instant to be confounded with the class of persons whose habit it is to denounce all vigour and earnestness in religion under the sweeping and odious title of enthusiasm. Far from borrowing a shaft from their bow, I desire never to forget that seriousness is an essential ingredient in true godliness; that a religion without warmth is worthless before God; and that the mere stubble, of which it is composed, will instantly and utterly perish in the fires of the Great Day. If religion be genuine, it will infallibly be seen and felt in the circle in which we move. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak; and often and emphatically shall we proclaim the praises of that God who gives us our outward comforts and our inward joys. If, therefore, scriptural warmth of feeling, strength of language, or vigour of conduct, are to be denounced as enthusiasm, I desire not merely to partake of such enthusiasm, but to see it diffuse itself over every corner of the world. Nevertheless, my Christian brethren, no real friend to Scripture can be a friend to enthusiasm, properly so called. Every page of the word of God

condemns a feverish and fitful religion—a religion that concerns itself exclusively, or even mainly, with the feelings—a religion of dreams and visions; of intimations often independent of Scripture, and often even opposed to it—a religion of turbulence, and vanity, and display. It is a short but most important maxim of holy writ, "Be sober." And on every follower of Christ the counsel may be prest, Have "zeal." but let it be "according to knowledge:" Love your Redeemer, but let it be the affection of a sound mind.—The religion, in fact, which has the warrant of Scripture, is not a vehement passion, but a strong and steady principle, gradually moulding the heart into a conformity with the Divine image; acting, not by sensible impulse, but by moral suasion; prompting to vigilance, purity, and self-restraint; and, in short, to a steady, unvarying, unflinching observance of the whole revealed will of God.

Having thus humbly endeavoured, with the lamp of Scripture in our hand, to search into some of the cases in which such cautions as those in the text are applicable, let us proceed, as was proposed, to consider,

II. To WHAT CASES THE COUNSEL OF THE TEXT IS NOT EQUALLY APPLICABLE.

1. And here, first, it is not justly applicable to any individual, simply because his *religious habits or opinions are found to rise above the level of opinion and practice exhibited by multitudes around him.*—In immaterial things, indeed, in matters of mere taste or convenience, or in those cases where Scripture, neither in letter nor spirit, delivers any distinct judgment or law, much deference is due to public opinion or to general custom. Singularity, without a sufficient object or warrant, originates, not in the tenderness of a well-informed conscience, but in the ebullitions of self-will or vanity, and is therefore both injurious to religion and offensive

to God. He who is the common Parent of all, and who delights to "make men of one mind in an house," cannot approve of such fanciful deviations from ordinary rules and practices as must almost necessarily interrupt the harmony and unity of his family. But peculiarity in opinion or practice may flow from a very different source, and be marked by the most opposite character. In some cases, for example, the Scripture takes one side, and the voice of custom or fashion another. In such instances, need I say that peculiarity is piety? The servant of the Lord must show himself "faithful among the faithless," and cleave to the Cross though all men forsake it. "We must obey God rather than man." On this principle the early Christians arrayed themselves against the general unbelief and criminal practices of the world around them. On this principle the father of the Reformation fought a single-handed conflict with Popery. And on this principle should every man act who believes that the number of offenders cannot change the character of the offence; that, not custom, but Scripture, must fix the eternal destiny of mankind; that at the great day the books to be opened are not the capricious edicts of national taste or individual fancy, but the unchanged and unchanging records of the word of God. To those individuals, therefore, who, in their conduct or habits, systematically deviate from the customs of the world, and who occasionally, perhaps, feel some misgiving as to the lawfulness or expediency of such deviation, I am bound to say,—Try the practices which distinguish you from others, by the test now produced. On a minute and careful examination, do they appear to be the offspring of fancy, or of Scripture? If of the former, they cannot be too soon abandoned; if of the latter, let no dread either of ridicule or hostility force you into a renunciation of them. What though you have to encounter the frown of the world; you possess the approbation of God. What though your associates in religion may be less

numerous than a tender heart and a social spirit would desire; you are, nevertheless, "not alone, for the Father is with you:" You are one of a large company: you are "come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; to God the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant." The faithful followers of God who are still tasting his mercies in this sublunary state of being; the happier servants who have fallen asleep in Jesus; the angels who dwell in the light of the Eternal Throne; the Lord of those angels; the mighty Spirit by whose influence they are illuminated with knowledge; and the co-equal Son of the Father, before whom they cast their crowns—these are all on your side; and "if God be for you, who shall be against you?" "Who shall lay any thing to the charge" of those whom God acquits? "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." The judgment of others upon ourselves is, no doubt, in every case, to be received with respect, and to be weighed with attention. Self-confidence and presumption are most anxiously to be shunned. But, after all, He, through whom alone we can be saved, is alone competent to determine upon the requisites of salvation. He, by whom alone we shall be judged, is alone authorized to prescribe the qualifications that shall be accepted at his awful tribunal. However crowded the ranks of the wicked, the worldly, or the indifferent,—pity them, pray for them, endeavour by all possible means to reclaim them;—but, whosoever are the offenders, or in whatever way they deviate from the path of duty, you are to fulfil the injunction of the Apostle,—to "come out from among them, and be separate, and

touch not the unclean thing," that ye may be "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty."

2. In the second place, a person is not to be esteemed "righteous over much" because he carries *religion, as a constraining and actuating principle, into all the circumstances and habits of his life.*—It is certainly possible that an individual should be devout in his manner at church, and, to a certain degree, strict in his observation of the Sabbath; that he should conduct what may appear to him the leading and master concerns of his life with a general, though cold and indistinct, reference to the providence of God, and nevertheless, escape nearly, or even altogether, the charge of "over-righteousness." Let him, however, once overstep the limits of this general and decorous piety; let him regulate his daily pursuits, practices, and communications, not boastfully, but with the utmost caution and delicacy, by the maxims and motives contained in the Bible; let him regard religion as the habit, not merely of the Sabbath and the church, but of every time and place; let him discover a tendency to pass from the inferior topics of conversation to the high concerns of God and eternity; let him occasionally, with whatever modesty and simplicity, advert to the "glad tidings of salvation" as to the main-spring of his hope and joy—am I uncharitable in supposing that he will incur no small hazard of drawing on himself, either the charge to which I have referred, or some analogous accusation? Can such censures, however, be justified? Is the will of God to be consulted only on what we deem important occasions? Are devotional feelings and principles to be confined to places of worship; to be denied all access or influence except on the Sabbath-day, or in the sanctuary? Is religion to be shut out from the daily intercourse of beings to whom it is the only source of unmixed and enduring joy? Is the theme of angels never to be the theme of those whose first object and hope it is to be added to that delighted company, to

stand in the same Glorious Presence, and to participate in the same anthems of gratitude and adoration? However men may endeavour to justify such an exclusion of religion from the common walks of life, it will surely not be attempted on the authority of Scripture: for, if so, what is the intention of the expressions, "In *all* thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths;" "Children, obey your parents *in the Lord;*" "Servants, be obedient unto your masters, *as unto Christ;*" "Masters, remember that ye have a Master in heaven;" "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus?" In short, my Christian brethren, the intention of the Book of God, from its first pages to its last, is to connect religion, as a motive, and rule, and principle, with every conceivable incident and practice in the life of every individual; to surround us with it as an atmosphere; to clothe us with it as a garment; to ally us to it as a perpetual guardian and instructer; to make it the anchor of every hope, the shield of every hour, the armour in every conflict; the deep, and wide, and clear, and ever-flowing river of our expectations and delights. This being the case, the piety which touches us at every point, accompanies us on all occasions, and restrains or impels us under all possible circumstances, is not over-righteousness, but is the religion approved of God, and to be honoured and cultivated by his creatures.

3. In the third and last place, a man is not to be esteemed "over-righteous" simply because he carries his *affections into his religion*—Here, as before, it is to be observed, that an individual may receive as true every letter of the word of God, or even exhibit a devout exterior in all the public offices of religion; and yet, so that his religion is characterized by a rigid exclusion of feeling, affection, sympathy, and zeal, he may escape the charge of "over-righteousness," and may live and die the unmolested possessor of, what must nevertheless be regarded as, a heartless, useless, unscriptural faith.

But if, estimating the great truths and promises of the Gospel at their real value; if, regarding with awe the edge of the precipice to which sin has conducted him, and with astonishment and delight the rescue which the free grace of the Son of God has provided; any person is prompted to speak and act under the deep impression of such sentiments, and, where opportunity offers, to call upon others, in language of suitable warmth, to participate in the pleasures of devotion and the contemplation of the triumphs of the Cross—am I wrong in supposing that the affectionate, fervent, devoted expressions or actions of such a person will, in most instances, bring down upon him the charge of over-righteousness? Here again, however, I must be permitted to ask, whether a mind in the state which I have described, and sincerely acting in obedience to its impressions, is justly chargeable with excess? Have we any scriptural sanction for branding such warmth of feeling, vivacity of expression, and depth and strength of emotion, with the odious title of fanaticism? Does not Scripture, on the contrary, insist upon a religion of affection? Is it not the injunction of God himself, "My son, give me thine heart?" Does not Christ say, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart?" And do not his Apostles hold a corresponding language? "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." And how strictly did the frame and character of the first and best servants of the Cross correspond with this language! They "loved Him because he first loved them." He was "precious" to "them that believed." Believing in him, they "rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Is this the language of Scripture? Then is the conclusion inevitable,—the love of God is not excess, the love of Christ is not excess; a consecration of every feeling and affection to the great Author of them, an ardent devotion to all the duties, and an eager pursuit of all the pleasures, of religion—these dispositions and acts

are not excess, are not enthusiasm, are not over-righteousness. Religion without love, is the carcass without the living soul by which it is to be animated. It is the perishable form, without that imperishable essence which will alone endure the scrutiny of the Supreme Judge, and survive the tempest of that day when the wheat shall be gathered into the garner, but the chaff shall be burned with fire unquenchable.

It is time, however, that we should bring to a close these observations on the general topics to which it was proposed to call your attention, especially as it is my wish to address a few concluding words to the two classes of individuals who appear to be more especially interested in this discussion.

1. And, in the first place, I would humbly and affectionately address myself to any individuals amongst us who, after looking at the subject in the point of view in which it has been my object to present it to them, may feel disposed to admit that they themselves have erred in *dealing out too rashly the charge of over-righteousness* on those more advanced than themselves in the feeling and practice of religion.—It is much, my brethren, for any of us who have offended, to have had our eyes opened as to the nature and amount of our transgression; and may a merciful God, in this instance, vouchsafe to the offenders the forgiveness which they honestly seek! May He cleanse them by the Blood of Atonement, and sanctify them by the influence of his Spirit!—Let such persons, however, remember, that restitution is one feature of genuine repentance; and endeavour, henceforth, to do justice to those whom they have calumniated, and to exalt the pretensions of genuine religion as much as they have hitherto depressed them. From henceforth, my brethren, be it your object to turn the weapon of reproof from the bosom of godliness and truth, against that of irreligion and worldliness. Give your zeal a

new and scriptural direction. Endeavour to teach the faith which you have hitherto condemned. Labour no longer to reduce others to the low level of your own religious attainments, but strive yourselves to reach the heights on which the servants of the Lord dwell. Be followers of them, as far as they are followers of their Master. Throw a veil over their infirmities where candour must pronounce them to be venial; strengthen their hands, and cheer their hearts. Cultivate more and more an unity of feeling and purpose with all who "love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Let the same golden chain of charity which binds you (as we may trust) to the Redeemer, unite you to every member of his family.

2. Lastly, I would address myself to *those* amongst us, if any such there be, *against whom others may have rashly or unjustly brought the charge of over-righteousness.*—Enough, I trust, has been already said for the encouragement of individuals on whom this imputation is falsely cast. But if not, let me beg you, my brethren, to call to mind that single declaration of the word of God, that if you patiently, cheerfully, devoutly "suffer" with your Master, you shall eternally "reign with him;" and let this hope carry you with joy and confidence through the thorny paths in which your calumniators constrain you to walk. Let not your confidence, however, degenerate into presumption or carelessness; nor let it be mingled with any feelings of resentment or aversion towards those that have misjudged you. Remember that the follies of the devout often provoke, though they do not justify, the hostilities of the rash or the wicked; and let this recollection at once teach you caution and charity. How important indeed, if you are really true and faithful servants of Christ, is the position you occupy! To you is committed the ark of the Lord. Will you, then, needlessly encumber it with any appendage which is likely to call out censure or excite ridicule? Strive

rather, by the power of God, to add prudence to piety; to connect "the spirit of a sound mind" with the affections of a large, warm, and devoted heart. Strive to adorn the Gospel with all which may win to it the homage of an unthinking world. Crown it, as it deserves to be crowned, with the sacred lustre of a holy, useful, and attractive life.—"Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things: and those things which ye have both heard and seen" in the examples of the faithful, "do, and the God of peace shall be with you."

SERMON II.

ON THE DOCTRINES OF THE CROSS.

1 COR. i. 23.

We preach Christ crucified.

Suppose the question to have been proposed to a heathen philosopher, or to any man unacquainted with the history of the Gospel, 'By what means a particular religion could be most successfully communicated to the world?' is it not obvious, that the means stated in the text to have been employed by the apostles of Christ would have been among the last to suggest themselves to his mind? He might perhaps have said, 'Feign some communication from Heaven: surround your new creed with the subtilties of logic, with the splendour of eloquence, or with the trappings of earthly pomp; exhibit the alleged author of it in some form calculated to awe or to attract the mind.' But would it ever occur to him to recommend, as the means of propagating a religion, to display its author in circumstances of infamy, pain, and death; to exhibit him on a cross between two thieves; to proclaim, again and again, the fact of his trial and crucifixion as a blasphemer and a rebel?

And yet, opposed as such a line of proceeding was to the policy and prejudices of man, St. Paul discovered good reason for adopting it. In the text, as well as in

other passages of his writings, he proclaims the preaching of the Cross to be the grand secret of his own success and that of his fellow-apostles. He constantly represents himself as coming to those over whose passions and vices he ultimately triumphed, "not with excellency of speech or of wisdom," but with a determination not to "know" or to proclaim "any thing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

The question, however, may be asked, 'Have *we* the like ground in our own days for believing in the duty and efficacy of this manner of proceeding? Is it still the duty of the minister of Christ to preach what may be termed the doctrines of the Cross; to proclaim the Son of God as a crucified Saviour; to insist much and emphatically upon his sufferings and death, upon the power of his grace, and the value of his atonement? And may he thus hope most effectually to combat the vices, the prejudices, and the passions of his audience?' These questions I have no hesitation to answer in the *affirmative.*

But as this is a point which may seem to admit of discussion, and will, if simply and scripturally examined, abundantly reward it, let us proceed, in dependence upon the Divine blessing, to show that the preaching of the Cross—or of those facts and doctrines which especially respect the crucifixion of the Son of God—is the most powerful of all means for the conversion of sinners. And this object I shall endeavour to accomplish by considering,

I. THE INEFFICACY OF ALL OTHER MEANS FOR THE CONVERSION OF MANKIND.

II. THE EFFICACY OF THIS PARTICULAR MEANS.

I. And here, in the first place, we are to consider THE INEFFICACY OF ALL OTHER MEANS, but the preaching of what may be termed the doctrine of the Cross, FOR THE CONVERSION OF MANKIND.

1. Consider, first, for example, the inefficacy of

mere eloquence.—Eloquence, it is true, has been found, in questions of this world, to be one of the most powerful instruments for touching and moving the affections and passions of the mind. When the celebrated orator of ancient Rome advocated the cause of a particular individual, the tyrant on his throne is said to have trembled before him. When the no less renowned orator of Greece was likely to plead, persons of the highest distinction, from many of the surrounding states, assembled to listen to him, and do homage to his genius: and such was the terror of his declamation, that the invader of Greece confessed himself more alarmed at the eloquence of Demosthenes than at the armies of his countrymen. But eloquence has never wrought the like effects in religion. It is not, indeed, too much to say, that mere eloquence has never wrought the least permanent effect in the conversion of sinners; but has proved itself, as to all spiritual consequences, to be "sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal." What could be easier, than to produce, in different ages, examples of instructers distinguished at once for eloquence and for a neglect of the doctrine of the Atonement, either without auditors, or addressing themselves to an audience wholly uninterested by their declamations? Who, indeed, has not felt the inefficacy of mere eloquence in touching the springs of religious feeling in his own soul? Who, on the contrary, has not felt the power of the simplest addresses drawn from a heart deeply affected by the love of God and of a Redeemer? In all cases, the eloquence which convinces the sinner is that which at once displays to him his own guilt and danger, and the Cross of that Saviour who came to live and to die for the salvation and deliverance of a guilty world.

2. Consider, secondly, the inefficacy of *mere outward pomp and form* for the conversion of the soul.—A considerable body of professing Christians appear to have imagined that religion was to be carried to the

heart of mankind mainly by pageantry and parade; by splendid vestments and painted walls; by choirs, and processions, and laborious and costly ceremonies;—that the consciences of men must be reached through their senses; and that to captivate the mind we must allure the eye. But no supposition can have less the support either of Scripture or of experience. If those judge ill for the interests of the Gospel who would rob it of the decent honours and sober dignity of the Reformed Churches, those appear to inflict an equally serious injury upon it whose aim it is to clothe it with ornaments unsuited to its lowliness and simplicity. The Great Author of the Gospel entered his own city riding "on a colt, the foal of an ass." His language was, "My kingdom is not of this world." And wherever men, by way of recommending the Gospel, have endeavoured to give it a new character, and to surround it with earthly glory, it has disdained the false honours, and left its human throne to be occupied by bigotry and superstition. Like its heavenly Author, it willingly stoops to wash the feet of the humblest disciple; but when men would by force crown it with such earthly distinctions as it does not covet, "it departs to the other side."

3. But, thirdly, consider the inefficacy of mere *argument* and *disputation* in the conversion of sinners. —Let me not, however, be mistaken. Nothing can be farther from my intention than to lend the smallest sanction to those who hold in contempt the acquisitions of science or learning. Reason is the favourite ally of religion. But when reason, forgetful of her rank and power, sets up her own standard, and, in the flush of those victories which religion has enabled her to win, fancies that she can combat single-handed with the corruptions of the heart, she is instantly taught the folly of her hopes. Like the once victorious troops of Ai, she is made to feel that she conquers no longer than while the Lord is in her camp. "Where," asks

the Apostle, "is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" And where, we may still ask, is the power of mere logic and disputation? Do not multitudes every day arise from exhibitions of this kind unconvinced and unconverted, who are afterwards found to melt under the tender and affectionate display of the doctrines of the Cross? Mere reasoning may unquestionably inform the head, and sharpen the critical powers of an audience; but here its power ceases. It is a withered hand, to which the truths of the Gospel are able to communicate new power and efficacy. But if, in defiance or contempt of the Gospel, it is stretched out to usurp the office of religion and supersede its authority, its weakness at once discovers itself, and it falls impotent and useless at our side.

4. Consider, fourthly, the insufficiency of the mere *truths of morality* for the correction and sanctification of the soul.—The question is not, whether these truths are of high importance; whether the duties connected with them are essential; whether it is right, or indeed necessary, for a minister of the Gospel to inculcate the doctrines of morality, and to insist upon the duties which arise out of them. Morality is a part of religion: our duties to man stand on precisely the same authority with our duties to God; and, therefore, he who insists upon the importance of the one, must admit the importance of the other. Nevertheless, my Christian brethren, the mere truths of morality will never convert the heart. It is possible, indeed, to bring men, by lessons of this kind, to a cold assent to the truth, that virtue is better, and fairer, and happier, than vice; but you will never thus make them in love with holiness; you will not arm them against temptation; you will not supply them with such motives for self-denial, for the crucifixion of the flesh, for separation from the vices of the world, for the sacrifice of interest and

popularity, as will enable them to triumph over their passions, and to go forth conquering and to conquer in the cause of righteousness and truth. You may lop off a few bad habits; but it is impossible by these means to lay the axe to the root of corruption. Others may *talk* of virtue: but the man who really loves his Redeemer, is the only man who thoroughly loves and who uniformly and consistently practises it.

On the whole, my brethren, if the value of eloquence, of the decent honours of public worship, of reasoning, and of moral truth, are indisputable, when employed as the auxiliaries of the Gospel; it is equally indisputable, that the instant they enter upon the conflict with corruption, alone, and in their own strength, like the chariots of Egypt dashed to pieces by the hand of Omnipotence, they present to the eye a melancholy evidence of the weakness and insufficiency of man. The whole field of human history is covered with monuments of the wrath of God against those who sacrifice the Gospel to their vanity and presumption, and attempt to fight the battles of religion without the weapons of the Lord.

II. But let us next, my Christian brethren, consider the second point to which it was proposed to call your attention; namely, THE ACTUAL POWER OF WHAT MAY BE TERMED THE DOCTRINES OF THE CROSS IN ACCOMPLISHING THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS. And, here, I am not about to appeal to theory, but to fact, as the only legitimate proof of such a position.

1. Consider, then, in the first place, the efficacy of these doctrines *in the earliest ages of the church of Christ.*—When the Apostles went forth to convert the world, what were the main topics chosen by them to work on the prejudices and consciences of their hearers? Let them answer for themselves: "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom;

but we preach Christ crucified: to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are saved... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." In like manner the same Apostle says, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." And observe the result of this mode of proceeding. During the life of Christ, though that life was adorned by every thing most lovely and attractive, though he "spake as never man spake," though his ministry was surrounded by the blaze of miracles and mighty demonstrations of the power of God, few converts comparatively were made. But as soon as the Apostles could plead the death of their Master; could lead the sinner to the tomb of his Saviour; could exhibit the Son of God mangled and bleeding on the cross; a new impulse appears to have been given to religion, and fresh power communicated to every sentence which they uttered. St. Peter no sooner stood up and proclaimed the Saviour, whom the Jews had "wickedly taken and *slain*... but who was assuredly Lord," than his hearers were "pricked in their hearts," multitudes were touched, convinced, and converted before the cross of Christ, and three thousand were added to them that believed. And when his brother Apostles went forth, in the strength of the same principles, it is said, the "word of the Lord mightily grew, and prevailed." It is therefore but fair to consider the early triumphs of religion as chiefly obtained by these doctrines. The once bigoted Jew, and the profligate Gentile—the proud member of a true church, and the polluted idolater—the nations who slept in darkness, who practised and justified every abomination; the luxurious worshipper of Jupiter in the Pantheon, and the naked and savage disciple of the Druids in our native woods;—all these, reclaimed, as we now behold them, from ignorance, and guilt, and blood, are to be regarded as so many witnesses to the power of the

truth, that the Son of God "loved us, and gave himself for us." "When I am lifted up," says our Lord himself, "I will draw all men unto me." And that declaration has been abundantly verified. From the moment of his death, the spectacle of his sufferings became, as it were, the talisman and magnet of religion: and hearts, which no violence could have subdued, have, in a thousand instances, softened under the beams of his pity and tenderness to a lost world.

2. But consider, secondly, the history of religion *among the Heathen nations in subsequent ages.*—Various means have been employed, by the missionaries of different Christian countries, to effect the conversion of the Heathen; but I know of no instance in which any real or permanent success has been granted to the labours of any instructers who have not made Christ, and him crucified, the main object of their ministry. Let us look at some of the distinct cases of missionary exertion which present themselves in the records of those different bodies.

It is worthy of remark, in the first place, that those bodies of professed believers in the New Testament who *are notorious for their rejection of the doctrine of the Atonement*, as though conscious of the inefficacy of their own principles for the conversion of unbelievers, have rarely or never undertaken any mission to the Heathen portions of the world.

It is no less notorious, that the missionaries of those bodies of professing Christians, who, without expressly rejecting the doctrine of the Atonement, attach little importance to it, and who have attempted, without its aid, even to promote the mere civilization of the idolater, have been wholly without success.

The case of the *Moravians*, who may be considered as among the most successful of all missionaries to the Heathen, lends much force to this argument. The journalists of these missions again and again inform us, that, as long as their teachers sought to move the

Heathen by mere moral reasonings, or even by the terrors of God's holy law, they failed; but when led, by continual disappointments, to insist upon the dying love and tenderness of Christ, in many instances the stubborn idolater at once acknowledged the power of the appeal, and became a convert to the Gospel.

In like manner, the celebrated Brainerd, when speaking of his triumphant mission among the Indians, says, that his chief object was to lead them to a view of the "corruption of their hearts;" and "at the same time to open to them the glorious and complete remedy provided in Christ for helpless, perishing sinners, offered freely to those who had no goodness of their own to recommend them to the Divine acceptance. When these truths were felt at heart, there was no vice unreformed, no external duty neglected: drunkenness, the darling vice, was discarded, and scarcely an instance of it known for months together."

The *Jesuit* missionaries in China, on the contrary, are represented as having, through fear of offending the taste of a people much attracted by pomp and splendour, attempted to conceal the ignominious death of Christ, and to display him exclusively in all the dignity and majesty of Divine power; and as having suffered the just penalty of their offence by a total failure in the object of their mission.

But the testimony of all times and countries is the same. It may confidently be affirmed, that, in the proportion in which the sufferings of the Cross are faithfully and feelingly displayed to the Heathen, their conversion is promoted. It would be easy to call many European witnesses of this truth. But perhaps it may be more satisfactory to listen to a North-American Indian, who had himself been rescued from the miseries and crimes of idolatry. When delivering his sentiments as to the best means of converting the Heathen, he said, "Brethren, I have been a Heathen myself, and have grown old amongst them; I therefore

know their modes of thinking. A preacher once came to us, desiring to instruct us; and began by proving to us that there was a God. On which we said to him, 'Well, and dost thou think we are ignorant of that? Go back to the place whence thou camest.' Then again another preacher came, and began to instruct us, saying, 'You must not steal, or become inebriated, or tell falsehoods, or lead abandoned lives.' We answered him, 'Thinkest thou that we know not that? Go, and practically learn these things thyself, and then teach them to thine own people; for who are more addicted to such vices than they?' Thus we sent him away also. At length a missionary came to my hut, and sat down by me. The contents of his discourse were nearly these: 'I come to thee in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth. He sends me to acquaint thee, that he would gladly save thee, and make thee happy, and deliver thee from the miserable condition in which thou at present liest. To this end he became man, gave his life a ransom for man, and shed his blood for man. All that believe in the name of this Jesus, obtain the forgiveness of sins. To all that receive him by faith, he giveth power to become the sons of God. The Holy Spirit dwelleth in their hearts; and they are made free, through the blood of Christ, from the slavery and dominion of sin. And though thou art the chief of sinners, yet, if thou prayest the Father in his name, and believest in him as the sacrifice for thy sins, thou shalt be heard and saved, and he will give thee a crown of life, and thou shalt live with him for ever in heaven.' I could not," added the converted native, "I could not forget his words. They constantly recurred to my mind. Even in sleep I dreamed of the blood which Christ shed for us. If, then," continued he, "you would have your words gain an entrance among the Heathen, preach to them Christ Jesus, his blood, his sufferings, and his death."—Such was the judgment of this converted Heathen, and it may be illustrated

and confirmed by the examination of almost any page in the history of idolatry.

3. Consider, thirdly, the evidences to the same truth to be collected from the *history of religion among the nations of Christendom*.—It is indisputable, that during the worst ages of Popery the doctrine of a crucified Saviour had fallen into disuse or contempt. I do not say that the outward emblems of this doctrine—the Cross and the holy Sacraments—were not exhibited in the Church of Rome. It is an evidence of the value of outward forms in religion, that, in the most abject and corrupt state of that church, their ceremonies remained to reproach them with their apostacy, and to serve as a rallying point for the love and devotion of serious Christians. But the Church of Rome, whilst they retained the shadow, in too many instances had sacrificed the substance. They had substituted *many* mediators for the one great Mediator between God and man, the "man Christ Jesus." They had in a great measure substituted, for the doctrine of justification by faith in the blood of a Redeemer, which is properly the doctrine of the Cross, that of justification by human works, merits, and penances. And in proportion as they thus disguised or disfigured the peculiar truths of the Gospel, both piety and morality decayed. Devotion refused to stay, where the claims of her Lord were forgotten, and his name and office confounded with those of his creatures. And let it be remembered, that religion never lifted up her head, or broke from the chains in which superstition had bound her, or produced any striking effect upon the conduct and character of men, till the Reformers, taking the doctrines of the Cross as the inscription on their banner, came forth to combat in the name and in the strength of the Captain of our salvation. Other attempts had been more than once made to cleanse the Church of Rome from her corruptions, and to revive the decayed piety of Christendom; but all failed, because they

carried not the Cross in the front of the battle; because they contended rather for a rectified morality than a pure Gospel; because they chose "excellency of speech and wisdom," when they should have "determined not to know any thing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

4. But, lastly, let us consider the power of the truths we have been considering *upon the hearts of individuals*. —Tell us, you who feel the influence of religion upon your own souls, in changing, improving, moralizing, and sanctifying the character, whether this effect has not been wrought by the power of these doctrines. Tell us, whether the transformation was accomplished either by the mere maxims of morality, or by dry reasonings on the beauty of virtue. Tell us, whether it was not wrought by the tidings of your lost estate as sinners, and of the full and free redemption purchased on the cross for a ruined world. Tell us, whether it was not on the altar on which our Redeemer was offered that you laid down, if they are laid down, your bad passions and tempers; your selfishness and worldliness; your pride and covetousness; your dishonesty to the public, and your unkindness in your families. Tell us, if conviction and experience do not constrain you to exclaim, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!"—As the instructers of others, have not some of us ascertained the impotence of every other doctrine? As private Christians, have we not discovered, that, although a "stumbling-block" to some, and "foolishness" to others, this crucified Lord is, to "those who believe, Christ the wisdom of God and the power of God?" If so, to us at least no demonstration can be necessary of the wisdom of the Apostle's resolution to "preach Christ crucified."

But, my Christian brethren, it is time to relinquish

a subject infinitely too large and important to be grasped in any single discourse. I would claim permission, however, very briefly to touch upon a few, out of the many, practical lessons suggested to us by the previous discussion.

1. And here, in the first place, what instruction does the text convey to *the ministers of religion!*—It is, indeed, our positive duty, as ministers and as men, in no single instance to neglect the prescribed forms and ceremonial of religion. It is our duty to dwell, at all times and in all places, upon the great principles of morality, and to insist upon the essential and delightful duties which arise out of them. It is a primary law of our religion, "Let every man that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." But if we stop here, we stop at a point where our ministrations will fail of their object; and where, like the magicians of Egypt, we shall be made to feel the impotence of all instruments but those which God puts into our hands. "Wo is me," says the Apostle, "if I preach not the Gospel:" and wherever the same offence is committed, the "wo" will follow. A neglect of the essential and peculiar truths of the Gospel is, in many instances, the secret curse which is withering the prosperity of churches, and destroying the souls of individuals.

2. What a lesson is here conveyed to *the parent*, or to *the instructer of youth!*—Persons so employed often lament the inefficacy of their labours on the hearts of those they love the best; and wonder that the stern and awful exhibitions, which perhaps they have thought it right to present, of the Divine character and law, fail to startle the young mind, to arrest it in its course of sin, and force it into the path of duty. Let such individuals be induced to change their mode of instruction. Let them proclaim to these young persons "Christ crucified." Let them labour to win those who will not be compelled. Let them strive to melt the heart which no violence will subdue. Show your children

the cross of Christ. Tell them of his "agony and bloody sweat; of his cross and passion; of his precious death and burial; of his glorious resurrection and ascension;" and see whether the experience of all ages will not be your own, and whether the display of the Cross will not be the deliverance and the salvation of the sinner.

3. And, finally, my Christian brethren, how important a lesson is supplied by the text to *ourselves* as individuals!—How often do we appear to have let down the net, and to have taken nothing; to have sought the correction of our tempers or our habits altogether without success! If this is the case, let us try the experiment suggested by the text, and seek this correction at the foot of the Cross. Let us implore Him, now that He is "lifted up," to "draw" us to himself. Of such an approach to our crucified Lord the success is certain. Whenever the happy period shall arrive in which the deep and living interest of the first disciples of Jesus in the great topics of his love, his sufferings, and his death, shall revive, then also will their general dispositions and practices, their self-denial, lowliness, suavity of temper, and magnanimity, return to this comparatively barren world; then shall the desert once more "rejoice and blossom as the rose: it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and of Sharon." Then, also, shall the triumphs and joys of the Church keep pace with its improvement: "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come again to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads! they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Hasten, O Lord, that glorious hour when "all thy children shall know" thee and love thee, "and great shall be the peace of thy children."

SERMON III.

THE INVISIBLE WORLD.

ZECH. i. 5.

Your fathers, where are they?

When we survey the page of history, and consider the myriads who in past times have crowded the marts of commerce or the fields of war; or when, turning from books to the common walks of life, we enter our own church-yard, and fix our eye on the green heaps which cover each the ashes of a human being: the question of the text, or questions analogous to it, almost irresistibly force themselves on the mind: "*Your fathers, where are they?*" What is become of those uncounted multitudes? whither are they gone? Has the mind perished with the body; or, if not, in what part of the regions of infinite space is it to be found? Is it miserable or happy? Is it dwelling in tranquillity and purity with God; or is it cast into the pit of which the smoke ascendeth for ever and ever? Our "fathers, where are they?"

At first sight, all attempts to answer such questions as these would appear to be extravagant. And, as far as respects *individuals*, every attempt to reply to them must, under all circumstances, be considered as not merely extravagant, but criminal. Let no man be in haste to decide upon the case of another; "To his own Master he standeth or falleth;" and the command to us is, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

But the difficulty of giving a sort of *general* reply to the question contained in the text is much diminished by this particular fact, that the Scripture itself has assigned a fixed and determinate place in the world of spirits to the soul of every human being. They are represented as passing away to one of two worlds—either to heaven, or to hell—to the world of holiness and happiness, or to the world of wickedness and misery—to the abode of angels, or to the abode of devils. The language of the Book of God is most explicit upon this point. It does not, indeed, indulge the unprofitable curiosity of mere speculators in religion, by describing the precise nature of the happiness to be enjoyed or the misery to be endured in the future state: but it unequivocally consigns, in that state, one portion of mankind to unmixed wretchedness, and the other to unmixed joy. The righteous are to go away into "life eternal," and the wicked and unbelieving into "everlasting fire." In all the immeasurable regions that constitute the universe of God, there is not found any middle region, or border country, for the neutral or the negative; a region in which they may touch the frontiers of the kingdoms of bliss and wo, without entering either; in which they may possess a sort of doubtful happiness or misery, corresponding with their state of dubious faith, love, and obedience, when resident upon earth.

With these important truths in our possession, let us proceed, in dependence upon the Divine blessing, to inquire what is the general reply to be given to the question of the text, "*Your fathers, where are they?*"—And, to this end, let us consider,

I. THE CASE OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED WITHOUT REAL PENITENCE FOR SIN, AND REAL FAITH IN THE REDEEMER; and,

II. THE CASE OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED PENITENT AND BELIEVING.

I. In the first place, then, we are to consider THE CASE OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED WITHOUT PENITENCE AND FAITH.—*That* class of our "fathers, where are they?"

It may be well to premise, that, in speaking of the present condition both of the bad and good, I shall speak of both as having already taken possession of that abode which they are finally to occupy, and in the porch or entrance to which the testimony of Scripture leads us to believe they await that judgment of the great day which is to convey them to their own place. As there is "no repentance in the grave," the final fate of the dead is as much decided as though that judgment had already passed.

1. In the first place, then, those who have died without repentance are *gone to a state in which the wicked are no longer the prosperous.*—In this world guilt is often successful, at least for a season. If it be true, especially in the case of enormous crimes, that our sin finds us out, and that retribution commonly in the end overtakes the offender; yet how often, even in the worst cases, does the penalty linger, and in other instances altogether fail, on this side the grave! Human justice cannot be so accurately administered as that, if one criminal suffer, another shall not escape, to triumph in the superior villany by which he has eluded the grasp of justice. "I myself," says David, "have seen the wicked in great prosperity." Whilst the blood-thirsty Ahab was enjoying the magnificence of a throne, the prophets of the Lord were plunged in the depths of dungeons. Whilst the Rich Man was feasting in his palace, Lazarus lay at his door covered with sores; and in these different circumstances each sank into the grave, and entered the world of spirits. But in the world to which the impenitent are gone, "many that are" now "first, shall be last." There the man "clothed in purple," because an unconverted sinner, "lifts up his eyes, being in torments." There, the man "faring sumptuously

every day," is himself the food of "the worm that never dieth." O how tremendous, my brethren, will be the reverses which that new state of things will exhibit! Cast your eye on the picture, presented to you in Scripture, of one of the monarchs of the East—of one whose name had adorned the periods of poetry, and had echoed in the shouts of nations—"How hath the oppressor ceased!... the Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers—how art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cast down to the ground which didst weaken the nations!.... thou art cast out as an abominable branch." Nor will the penalty be confined to one class of offenders. The principle, the habits, the theories of men, will be brought to a new test; and however veiled in this world by the subtilties of logic, or emblazoned by the colours of eloquence, will there display their real nature and character. Then shall the trophies of the mere orator, or patriot, or warrior, and all that enchants the eye of the mere worldly examiner, perish in the fire which consumes the elements and rolls up the heavens as a scroll. How truly awful is the language of the Prophet just quoted, when describing the effects of the wrath of God: "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty.... for the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low.... and they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth." "*Your*" impenitent "fathers, *where are they?*"

2. In the second place, *the impenitent and unbelieving are gone to a state in which they have no longer any hopes of escape, or means of approach to God.*—Well may the unrighteous, if they have any just conception of their condition before God, cling to this state of

being. Whilst there is life, there is *hope*. In the darkest earthly sky, a star arises. I do not say, that the expectation of men is always well founded, or that it is not often altogether without foundation: but still it is hope; and, however fallacious, yields for the time as much relief to the sufferer as though it had the warrant and sanction of Scripture. Whoever has had occasion to witness the workings of a mind under the agonies of despair, knows something of the intensity of their sufferings to whom "hope never comes." And yet such is the condition of those who have passed into another world in a state of impenitence. If the question be asked, "*where are they?*" there is no answer but one; *They are in a world without hope* —in a world where self-delusion is impossible; where every man takes the just measure of his woes, and believes that penalty to be eternal which God has ordained to be so. It is, comparatively, of small consequence what the precise nature of the punishment of another world may be. It is possible that our conceptions of it are erroneous; that even the figures employed in Scripture to describe it, fail, from our want of spiritual discernment, to convey a just notion of it to the mind. But, whilst these two facts are indisputable, that the suffering is *interminable*, and that the sufferer *believes it to be so*, the slightest penalty, under such circumstances, is too awful to be contemplated without horror and dismay.

3. In the next place, *our impenitent fathers are gone into a state in which God is known only as the God of vengeance.*—In this world God reveals himself chiefly in the most opposite character. It is true, indeed, that He is represented in Scripture as, even in this world, dealing with us not as the innocent, but as the fallen creatures of his hand;—not as with persons in a state of reward, but of probation;—not as with those whose unwavering love to his name, and uniform obedience to his commandments, daily call out his essential ten-

derness and benignity; but as with those who are by nature at "enmity" with him, and are continually provoking his resentment by acts of rebellion and ingratitude. Still, in this world, his wrath is at least suspended: he is still in "judgment remembering mercy;" still "drawing us by the cords of love;" still acting the part of a tender though offended Parent; still inviting us to himself in the gentlest accents of compassion. In this world, he is exhibited as God in Christ; as having sent his own Son in human form, to win us by his goodness, to attract us by his example, and to redeem us by his blood. In this world, in short, the *naked* justice of God never displays itself, and Mercy continually sheathes the weapon which Anger has laid bare. But in the world of impenitent spirits Mercy interferes no longer. Even the voice of the Great Advocate is silenced; and, by a terrible reverse in his office, he himself arises to tread the wine-press of Almighty wrath. Take up especially the book of the Revelation of St. John, open it almost at random, and how awful are the descriptions of the vengeance of the Last Day which present themselves! "If any man shall worship the beast and his image .... the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, poured out *without mixture*, into the cup of his indignation: and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and the presence of the Lamb! .... and they have no rest day and night." But, my brethren, the topic is too awful to be dwelt upon without terror and anguish of mind. It is impossible not to enter upon it with pain, and quit it with delight. May a merciful God render the denunciations of his law every day less essential to us! May the increased outpouring of his Spirit, and our consequent growth in love to him and obedience to his precepts, prepare every heart rather for the promises than the threats of religion! May your ministers be more and more authorized to unfold to you the joys and glories

of your Father's kingdom, and say, "all is yours," for "ye are Christ's!" May multitudes, moved either by "the terrors," or by "the mercies," of the Lord, "cast their idols ..... to the moles and to the bats," and the God of love be enthroned in the hearts of a submissive and affectionate people!

Let us go on, as was proposed,

II. To reply to the question, "your" PENITENT AND BELIEVING "fathers, where are they?"

1. In the first place, they are no longer in a state of *trial and affliction*.—In this world the servants of God are often the children of sorrow. If the Prophets, and Apostles, and Martyrs may, without impropriety, be described as the most eminent servants of the Lord, they may also without hesitation be ranked as amongst the greatest of human sufferers. In what language does St. Paul describe the trials of those preachers of righteousness who had preceded himself! "They were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented: of whom the world was not worthy." And how like to this is the language in which he describes his own sufferings! "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." The account to be given of these afflictions of the good is, that "as many as the Lord loves he rebukes and chastens." He suffers none of their sins to want the chastisement which is necessary to the good of the offender: "he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, *that* they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness." But in the world to which your penitent and believing fathers are gone, this season of trial and chastisement is over. They once tossed on the sea, but they have

now entered into the haven. They for a time drank the cup of bitterness, but they have attained to perfect health. They are gone to the world where correction is superfluous; where reproof is never heard; where all have gazed upon God till they have been transformed into the purity and loveliness of the Divine image. Of that world it is said, "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." And justly is it stated, that, before pain and sorrow shall cease to exist, the "former things shall have passed away." For what a world of change, and loss, and sorrow, is that which we inhabit! How do the proudest fabrics of earthly happiness melt like the visions of enchantment! How wide is the circumference of disease and calamity! How sudden and irregular are the visitations of death! O what transport, to live in a region where all happiness that is once possessed, is possessed for ever, and the joys of this instant the joys of eternity! And such is the character of the world of spirits: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and *he shall go no more out*:" "We know that if our house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, *eternal, in the heavens*."

2. In the second place, your *penitent* "fathers" *are gone to a world where temptation never enters.*—Here it is one of the great trials of those who serve God faithfully, that no hour, or place, or condition is secure from the invasion of the great enemy of souls; that, not only Adam in paradise, Noah in his vineyard, David in his palace, Job in the bosom of his family, St. Paul in the full career of his ministry, are exposed to the assaults of the tempter; but that all men, in all circumstances, lie open to this mysterious and malignant invasion of their hopes and joys. Nor let the evils which flow from this source be disregarded. Those

no longer think of them slightingly, who are already beginning to suffer in another state the penalty of their want of vigilance while on earth. Our Lord did not think of them slightingly when he said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I *have prayed for thee*." Nor did *he* think of them slightingly, who by such wonderful intercession had been saved from final apostacy and perdition; for his counsel is, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." It is true that our Heavenly Father will not suffer his servants to be tempted "above that they are able;" that he "knows how to succour them that are tempted;" and, "with every temptation, to make a way to escape." But, still, the hour of conflict cannot be the hour of joy. Into the happy world to which your penitent and believing fathers are gone, temptation cannot come. Thence the tempter himself has been excluded; and there every object and every event, instead of furnishing, as in this world, an inducement to sin, exhibits an opposite character and tendency, and acts as an added inducement to holiness. The inmates of that sinless region are perpetually invited and attracted to a closer approach to God; to a more intimate communion with the Redeemer; to unite in the new song; to sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb; to walk by the streams of the water of life, and gather of the golden fruit which grows in the paradise of God. *There*, every sight we see, every sound we hear, every individual with whom we communicate, shall become, if I may so express it, an apostle of religion, a preacher of righteousness, an advocate for love, and obedience, and self-devotion to God, and to the Son of his love and participator in his glory.

3. In the third place, your penitent and believing fathers are gone to a world *where doubt or despondency never comes*.—In this state of being, one of the heaviest

trials to which, especially, minds of a delicate cast are exposed, is that of despair about the pardon of sin and an admission into the kingdom of heaven. It is of no avail, in a particular frame of the spirits, that the promises of God to the lowly and contrite are sprinkled as thickly over the pages of Scripture as the stars over the face of heaven: the mind is unable to discern or appropriate these promises. It sees only the dark side of the pillar of the Divine presence. It hears the voice of the Lord, as it thunders in the tempest of his displeasure, not as it breathes the soft whispers of mercy and of peace. In the emphatic language of the Prophet, such persons "walk in darkness and have no light." But your penitent and believing fathers, "where are they?" In a world where doubt never enters; where "perfect love casteth out fear;" where they see no longer "through a glass, darkly, but face to face;" where the veil of mystery is rent away, and "they see as they are seen, and know as they are known;" where He whom they acknowledged as their Master and only Saviour on earth, is their visible comforter; where he leads them by living fountains of consolation, and disperses every cloud by the brightness of his glorified presence. Who can say what the sight of God will be, to the despondent and dejected creature, whose religious view has been chiefly directed to the catalogue of his own transgressions, to the threats of the Divine law, to the uncompromising purity of the scriptural standard of righteousness, and to the flames of interminable vengeance? Yet, if he has died penitent and believing, he shall see God face to face; shall awake, and be satisfied with his likeness; shall "sit down" and "sup" with Him; and drink of the rivers of His pleasures for evermore.

4. Finally, your penitent and believing fathers are gone to a state where *their infirmities and corruptions cannot follow them.*—Here, alas! the power of corruption, even in the best servants of God, is considerable.

What, besides its overwhelming power, can explain the disputes, the worldliness, the cowardice, the desertion, of the disciples before the death of Christ; the temporizing of Peter, and the contention of Paul and Barnabas, afterwards? What besides can explain the strong language of St. Paul, when describing his own state and character: "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"—Nor are the proofs of the influence of a corrupt nature confined to one age. Most affecting are the examples, which every day's experience forces upon us, of the imperfection even of those who on the whole serve God not only truly but zealously. He feels this the most strongly who studies his own heart the most closely. No man can be acquainted with himself, who is not ready every hour to exclaim, "Save, Lord, or I perish!" What, then, will be the transport of escaping from that burden of depravity, which clings, like the corpse to the living body in the Roman punishment, which weighs down the wings of the mind, which fetters the free spirit, and detains the soul from its inheritance in the region of glory and of love! What transport, to awake in the likeness of God, without wrong desires, tastes, passions, tempers; to feel the disencumbered spirit rise upward to its proper good; to run the circle of duty, like the planets in their course, undeviating in their path, unwearied in their progress, and unsullied in their brightness! Is it delightful to feel ourselves in a moment set free from some great impending calamity; delightful to escape from the iron grasp of disease; delightful to break the bonds of long and dreary imprisonment? O how much more delightful to escape from the bondage of corruption, and the disease of sin; and soar into the eternal tranquillity of the Divine presence! "Your fathers, where are they?" If, my brethren, they have

bowed under the sense of sin before the cross of Christ, if they are washed by his blood and sanctified by his Spirit, they already catch a distant glimpse at least of the Throne where the Saviour of sinners divides the honours and glories of the Godhead, and soon they shall be seated at his feet for ever and ever.

I will conclude by pressing two additional observations upon the attention of my hearers.

1. In the first place, if such are the glories of the one state we have been contemplating, and such the miseries of the other, *what thanks are due to that Redeemer who has, of his own unmerited mercy, and by the sacrifice of his own life, rescued us from the anguish of perdition, and thrown open to us the gates of the mansion of God!*—Yes, my brethren, if any one of those we loved the best, and who has paid the debt of nature, is not now reserved in chains for the anguish of the last day; if, in reply to the question, 'Your parent, your child, your husband, your wife, where are they?' we may venture confidently to answer, 'In the porch of heaven, and only awaiting the judgment of the great day to establish them in all its beatitudes;' it is to be ascribed, first and last, and altogether, to the compassionate love of Him who said, "whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." O may the songs of our praise and gratitude ascend to the throne of the most high God, and of his Son Jesus Christ! May our devotion and affection to the Saviour of sinners assume something of a shape and character commensurate with his mercy! Awake, our sluggish hearts, awake! and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, prompt and impel us to surrender every faculty and gift of soul and body, as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to that Lord who has bought us with the price of his own blood.

2. And, finally, remember, that very shortly—*who* shall say how shortly?—*the question we are to-day*

putting about others, will be put about ourselves.— Another generation shall soon arise, who will ask, with regard to you and to me, "Your fathers, *where* are they?" And, my brethren, if we die as we are now living, what would be the answer suggested by Scripture to this all-important question? Are we "meet" for that holy "inheritance?" Are we prepared for the world where nothing that is impure can enter? Are we familiar with the themes in which its happy spirits delight? Are their occupations already our choice? And would heaven, if we were suddenly admitted to it, be, as it ought to be, rather another stage of the same existence, than a new mode of being, demanding a total transformation of all our habits of feeling and acting? Soon, my brethren, our children, or our other connexions, shall stand over our tombs. Soon they will water some new heap of earth, or fabric of stone, with their tears. Soon you and I shall live only in the memory and hearts of our successors. O let us labour to bequeath to them the satisfaction of sorrowing not as those without hope; of being able to regard us as among the spirits of the just; of contemplating us, by the eye of faith, as admitted to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and drinking the cup of his joys in the kingdom of glory. The last sand is sinking in the glass of some of us, and in all cases death beats at the door. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" save us from the last enemy; and, as we sink to the grave, let our sorrowing survivors hear a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours."

SERMON IV.

ST. JOHN'S DISCOVERY OF HIS LORD.

JOHN xxi. 4—7.

But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore; but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord.

INCONSISTENCY prevails to such an extent in the conduct of fallen and sinful man, that it is rarely either safe or charitable to regard any one action as a decisive sample and specimen of the general character. On the contrary, the particular act furnishes, in many instances, an exception, and even a contrast, to the general habits. It is like an accidental cloud in a sky which is commonly clear and bright, or like a spot of verdure in the midst of a cheerless and unprofitable desert.

But of the Lord and Saviour of the world it is said, that He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." In his pure and consistent character, every single act is, in the strictest sense, a specimen of the whole; and may therefore serve as a guide to the general dealings to be expected at his hands. In this way, every movement of goodness, of forbearance, and of tenderness,

is properly regarded as an additional pledge that he will be always good, and long-suffering, and tender. His past interferences of mercy become the tokens of his future compassion; each action the image of a thousand actions; and, the history of any one of his faithful soldiers and servants, the history, to a great extent at least, of every member of his large and happy family.

It is chiefly with a view to consider the interesting and pathetic passage which I have now read to you, in its general bearing on the character of our blessed Redeemer, and on the expectations which may be entertained of him by his creatures, that I have selected it for our examination to-day; and may it please God to prosper our endeavour to understand it, and to apply it to our practical improvement.

Let us consider the several incidents of the story in the order in which they arise in the text.

I. And here, in the first place, I would direct your attention to THE AFFECTIONATE INTEREST which appears to have been FELT BY OUR LORD IN THE MINUTEST WANTS OF HIS DISCIPLES.—"*Jesus*," it is stated in the text, "*saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat?*"

It is difficult for us, my Christian brethren, with our limited knowledge of the actual condition even of those most intimately connected with us, to approach to the slightest conception of a Being before whom all the wants of all his creatures are spread like the very simplest map before the eye of the examiner. And, yet, such is the knowledge possessed by our Lord of the circumstances of his creatures: "He knew what was in man;" "the Lord knoweth them that are his:" "he calleth them all by their name." He had watched the approaches of the great enemy to Peter, when the Apostle was wholly unconscious of them: "Simon,

Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat." He saw the same Apostle, when plunged in the depths and darkness of the dungeon, and sent his angel to deliver him. And, in the present instance, he beheld the disciples standing dejected upon the shores of the sea, and came in person to cheer and assist them.

But it is my wish, on the present occasion, to call your attention, not so much to the *capacity*, as to the *disposition* of our Lord to bless, and to bless even those who might seem the least to deserve mercy at his hands. Observe the tenderness of his address on the occasion before us: "*Children, have ye any meat?*" On whom is it that he here bestows the honourable and endearing title of his 'children?' On men, let it be remembered, who, whatever might have been their former fidelity and attachment, had, within only a few days, forsaken him and fled; had deserted him in the hour of his utmost need; had abandoned him on the very cross to which he had been nailed for their own eternal deliverance. On these poor, frail, and inconsistent creatures, because he perceives in them "the root of the matter"—contrition, lowliness, and love to him, a willing spirit and a warm heart—he bestows this high and delightful appellation. Here, then, my Christian brethren, I beg you to call to mind the truth stated in the opening of this discourse,—that one act of the Saviour is to be regarded as a sample or specimen of the whole;—and how powerful is the consolation supplied by the text! If such be the uniformity of our Lord's character, then, it is not only to the disciples, as they lingered disappointed and desolate on the shore, that he addresses this language of compassion, but he addresses questions of a similar import to all those who faithfully serve him: "Children, have you" what you need or desire? Have you supplies for the body and the soul? Have you strength, and peace, and joy? Have you a humble hope that your sins are pardoned,

and a well grounded expectation of heaven? Have you learned by actual experience that God is a "sun and a shield," and that he will withhold no good from "them that walk uprightly?" Numerous are the discoveries which, even in this world of trial and perplexity, the real follower of the Redeemer makes of the compassion of the Master he loves and serves. And it can scarcely be doubted that one of the delightful occupations of the world of spirits will be to decipher the mysteries of this state of existence; to fathom the depths of the Divine compassion; to strip the veil from the obscure passages of our past lives; and discover, by the light of Heaven, how early and how late, how constantly and how earnestly, in the midst of how much negligence and ingratitude on our own part, the grace of the Redeemer has been exerted in our favour, his wing spread over us, and his everlasting arm outstretched for our deliverance.

II. But observe, secondly, in this passage, THE REPLY OF THE DISCIPLES TO OUR LORD: "they answered him, *No*."

In this instance, the disciples of Christ are simply acknowledging a want of the body. They had no food, and, as is always the case in wants of this nature, they were sufficiently ready both to admit and to deplore the want of it. Bodily privations are not only keenly felt but readily acknowledged, because the acknowledgment does not necessarily imply any fault in him who makes it. But this is not equally true as to the wants of the soul. In this case, men are neither quicksighted to discover their necessities, nor free to confess them. Many of those who are, in fact, "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," are described in Scripture as considering themselves "rich, and increased with goods, and having need of nothing."

It may, perhaps, assist to prove the extent to which

this spiritual blindness prevails, if we show how different is the view taken by us of certain bodily evils, and of those spiritual evils which have a sort of analogy to them.

All the world, for example, concur in considering, as an object of commiseration, the individual who, by the chances of war or the operations of disease, has lost his limbs, or any part of his bodily frame. Compare, then, the case of such an individual with the man who is living in sin, or, if not in open sin, yet in disregard of God, and inattention to the interests of eternity. What is this, also, but a case of moral mutilation? Is he not, in his present state, a man divested of those powers and faculties by which he can promote the great ends and objects of human existence,—the glory of God, his own salvation, and the salvation of those around him? Is he not destitute of all which constitutes the real ornament, and glory, and value of his nature? Has he what may be termed the senses and faculties of the spiritual man? Has he an ear for the intelligence from above? Has he a voice for the songs of the blessed? Has he any taste for the bread which cometh down from heaven? Has he an eye for all the glorious realities of the invisible world? Is he able to look behind the veil of earthly illusion, and to behold the fair regions of tranquillity and joy; the throne of the Lord; the "King in his beauty;" the city that hath foundations; the river of life; the "tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations?"

In like manner, it is considered as an affecting spectacle to behold a prisoner locked to his floor of stone, or moving slowly under the grasp of his fetters. But turn once more to the sinner. What is he but a prisoner?—the world his prison-house; his lusts and tempers the bonds of the soul; and the whole man, in the expressive language of Scripture, "taken captive by the devil at his will;" dragged on from day to day through a succession of scenes and actions, which perhaps he himself

feels to be the prelude and preparation for intolerable and interminable wo? "If the Son make" him "free," he will be "free indeed;" but, till then, a more abject slave does not crawl upon the earth. Slaves in the body may be free at heart; but his slavery is the bondage of the soul.

Once more. Perhaps the case felt and acknowledged on all sides to be the most miserable, is that of the poor maniac, locked up also in his dark dungeon; the victim, it may be, of some monstrous delusion; mistaking stones for bread, a straw for a sceptre; or playing rashly and ruinously with the instruments of his own destruction. But is not he who lives without serious and earnest religion, the subject of a still more awful delusion? What is that, but a sort of madness of the soul, which induces a being gifted by nature with all the powers of reason, to sacrifice his God to his vices; his soul to his body; eternity, with all its glorious realities, to the life which is "but a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away?" Is not such a man, in a sense, beside himself? Is he not mistaking stones for bread; poison for food; misery for joy? Is he not rushing from hour to hour upon his own destruction? Is he not, when compared with the great conclave of spirits around the Throne, with all the family of God in heaven and upon earth, literally and in fact a creature by himself; holding, as it were, a solitary and singular opinion, opposing his own peculiar judgment to the judgment of a countless multitude? And is not this the very definition given of insanity? If that crowded assembly be rational, is not he, in the worst sense of the word, insane?

What therefore, to return to the point from whence we set out, remains for every man, but to ask of God a quickness in discovering the wants and diseases of the soul, and a readiness in acknowledging them? Let even the most perfect acknowledge their imperfection; the most complete, their deficiencies; the most profit-

able, their unprofitableness. Let all adopt the confession of Job, "Behold, I am vile: I will lay my hand on my mouth." Above all, let the sinner, the worldling, the slave of temporal objects, be ready to say, 'I have nothing, and I am nothing; I am destitute where I ought to abound; I am an outcast from God and a profligate in his family, when I might dwell in his bosom and enjoy his love for ever.' And may every one, who in sincerity of soul makes the confession of David, "I have sinned against the Lord," receive from Heaven the same cheering and delightful assurance, "the Lord also hath put away thy sin."

III. In the third place, I would call upon you to notice in the text THE BLESSING VOUCHSAFED TO THE READY AND AFFECTIONATE OBEDIENCE OF THE DISCIPLES TO THE WORD OF THEIR MASTER. —The disciples had, up to the moment of our Lord's appearance, laboured at their calling in vain; they had toiled all night, and taken nothing. But no sooner did they, at his command, cast the net on the right side of the ship, than, it is said, "they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." How important, my brethren, is the lesson to be deduced from this part of the history before us!

I am not, indeed, about to tell you, that in these days, as in those of the disciples, a miracle will be wrought for the benefit of those who comply with the will of God. It is, however, hazarding nothing to say, that every true servant of Christ, setting himself sincerely, and in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, to accomplish his will, may expect much from the grace and love of his Redeemer, acting by the instrumentality of ordinary means, but producing effects which may be considered as, in a sense, *beyond nature.*

How striking, for example, are those *answers to prayer* which may not seldom be observed in the lives of the devout and consistent servants of God! How

often are deliverances granted, are wants supplied, are calamities removed, are sudden fountains of hope and joy opened in the path of the destitute and disquieted soul! How often does the bread suddenly fall in the wilderness, and the water gush from the hard rock! And, where even the precise gift for which the contrite supplicant asks is not granted, how often is some different and still higher blessing vouchsafed! Or, if this be not the case, how frequently is a frame of mind bestowed which is in itself a remedy for all evils, a shield against every arrow, an all-sufficient safeguard against every impending calamity! It is stated, by naturalists, to be one of the appointments of a kind Providence, that, when the animal of a milder climate is conveyed to some more severe region, the natural covering changes to one of a closer texture, and better adapted to the inclemencies of his new residence; so that, though the climate remain the same, its new inhabitant suffers little or nothing from the fresh severities to which he is exposed. And there is something analogous to this in the change which is wrought in the mind of the true Christian. His outward difficulties may remain the same: the storms may be as rough, the path as rugged, the barriers in his path as lofty and formidable, as before; but that tender Father, who, in his wisdom, sees fit not to change the circumstances of the individual, nevertheless changes the man himself, and by means of that transformation renders every other superfluous. Look, for instance, at the Apostles, when brought under the influence of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit. Where is their old irritability; their feverish solicitude about earthly distinction; their fear of man; their heart-burnings, and selfishness, and inconstancy? They have sunk, as the enemies of Israel are said to have sunk, "like lead in the mighty waters," and under the power of the same mighty Hand. And such also is the case, even in the present day, of those who follow Christ fully: the outward circumstances may remain

the same, but the man is new; and, in virtue of his renovation, he is able, even amidst the tempest and whirlwind of difficulty, to say, "None of these things move me;" to "rejoice in tribulation;" to sing praises "in a dungeon;" to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." Such, then, my brethren, will be the ultimate fruits of an honest, and holy, and scripturally directed effort to fulfil the whole will of God. Need I, then, urge you anxiously and indefatigably to avail yourself of this great and compassionate law and principle in the Divine administration? Will you not strive, even amidst the worst emergencies and disappointments of life, to "cast the net on the right side of the ship;" or, in other words, to seek your happiness and interest in the very place, and after the very manner, which your Lord himself prescribes? He who has said that "to obey is better than all burnt-sacrifice," will fulfil every promise by which he invites us to a life of resignation and conformity to his holy will.

IV. I come now, fourthly, and lastly, to notice ST. JOHN'S IMMEDIATE DISCOVERY OF THE PRESENCE AND BOUNTY OF HIS LORD, which is so simply and beautifully described in the last verse of our text. No sooner did "the disciple whom Jesus loved" perceive how abundant and marvellous a supply was vouchsafed to himself, and his brother disciples, than he exclaimed, "*It is the Lord.*"—And, in the temper of mind displayed in this expression, we have one of the distinguishing marks of a mind taught by the Spirit of God, and bound by love to a compassionate Redeemer. Individuals of a worldly cast are apt to refer the blessings bestowed on them to a great variety of causes; sometimes to accident; sometimes to their own dexterity or merits; and sometimes to those of others. But the disciple who really loves his Master, though sensible of the necessity of exertion for his own welfare;

though cordially alive to every act of tenderness in those around him; though filled with all the sympathies which sweeten the cup of domestic happiness; yet, in the first place, and mainly, refers all gifts, comforts, and blessings, to the free, unbought, and unmerited love and grace of his God and Saviour. As every mercy descends upon him, he exclaims, '"*It is the Lord:*" I know *his* voice in the whisper of peace; I see *his* hand in the distributions of love.' The largeness of the gift at once reveals to him the hand of the Giver. He needs no messenger from above to assure him of the presence of his Lord. He sees him every where. And, at all times, his language is, "Praise the Lord, O my soul: while I live will I praise the Lord; I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being."

But, my brethren, having detained you thus long in simply offering these plain observations on the several parts of the text, I would now claim permission, in conclusion, to state two practical remarks, which appear to me naturally connected with them.

1. In the first place, let us learn from the subject which has been presented to us *to correct our conception both of the character of real religion, and the feelings and duties connected with it.*—There are individuals who complain of any thing like warmth, eagerness, and affection in the service of God. And if the views which such persons often take of religion be just, such complaints cannot be a matter of wonder. If, indeed, religion consists merely in running a round of lifeless ceremonies; in yielding a weekly tribute of unmeaning homage; in bending the knee, when the heart is uninterested; in offering to a tyrant the homage due only to a father; in loyalty of expression, while we are rebels in mind; in apparently spreading the hand of supplication, while, by our deeds and the ruling dispositions of our minds, we are in fact uplifting the banner of revolt; then, indeed, all religious feeling,

and sympathy, and joy, are nothing less than preposterous. But if, on the contrary, religion is such a service as that rendered by St. John to his Lord; if one of its main features is a readiness to discover and acknowledge the presence and the bounty of our Redeemer; if it is to adore *Him* whom our soul loveth; if it is to draw nigh to the tenderest of all friends; to hear his voice, to feel his hand, to rest upon his affection, to fulfil his will; to know that he watches over, and guides, and pardons, and loves, and sanctifies us; that all our peace, hope, and joy, are his free gift, are tokens of his present compassion, and pledges of his future love;—*then*, coldness and lifelessness in religion are obviously unnatural, and even monstrous; and we may believe that the angels of God contemplate with astonishment and awe the depth of that corruption which allows of insensibility or tameness in the midst of such blessings, and in the service of such a Master. Justly, therefore, may we say, to those who refuse to take a scriptural view of the character of God, 'If the Lord be such a Being as you conceive, it is not enough merely to serve him with coldness—serve him not at all; treat his altars with neglect, and his name with contempt;—for such a Being can have little claim upon your homage and affection. But if the Gospel be true; if our God is the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort;" if our Redeemer is the "good Shepherd," who "laid down his life for his sheep;" *then* renounce all coldness and neutrality; bend your knee and bow your heart before your Father and Friend; and let every corner in the temple, and every chamber of your dwelling resound with hymns of gratitude. "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things; with his own right hand and with his holy arm hath he gotten himself the victory:" "He hath visited and redeemed his people:" "This is our God; we have waited for him: this is the Lord; we will rejoice and be glad in his salvation."'

2. Lastly, Let me urge upon the servants of God *the assiduous and devout cultivation of that spirit of love, and of intimate union with him, by which the religion of St. John is characterized.*—It cannot be questioned, that the tenderness of our Lord, of which you have so striking a display in the text, is felt and exercised towards his church in all ages. What, then, I would now ask for, is the same promptness to recognise the presence, the hand, the love of our Redeemer, which is here manifested by the disciple whom he loved. We readily enough, perhaps, discover the hand of God in the gift of great and peculiar bounties; in the deliverance from powerful temptations, or from awful and appalling dangers. But do we also recognise it in our every-day blessings,—in the exemption from trials; in the gift of health, of competency, of kind friends, of a free government, a scriptural church, a liberty to seek God and to benefit his creatures according to the dictates of our own conscience? Do we discover his power and his presence in the splendour of the heavens and the verdure of the earth, in the music of the woods and the fragrance of the flowers? Do we also recognise the love and power of God where the task is still more difficult,—in scenes of trial and of sorrow; in the tempest which strips the fair branch of family happiness, and leaves us in silence and solitude to pursue the pilgrimage of life; in the sudden extinction of our worldly expectations, and the dissipation of the thousand day-dreams with which fancy or enthusiasm had surrounded us? Are we prompt to say, amidst the crush and tumult of disaster, '"*It 'is the Lord?*" I hear his voice even amidst the 'rushing of the whirlwind. I see him riding on the 'storm, and subduing all things by the energy of his 'love, and causing them to work "together for my 'good."' Happy, thrice happy, the heart which is thus quick to discover and acknowledge the mercy of the great Benefactor, and which maintains this intimate

communion with him! Cherish that intimacy, my Christian brethren, with the deepest anxiety, by constant vigilance, and by earnest prayer. Avoid every thing which may weaken or interrupt it. And to this end, remember, that the feast at which your Lord cannot preside, is no feast for you; the friend whom your Lord cannot take to his bosom, is no friend for you; the amusement which, by its opposition to a scriptural rule or spirit, would have cost him tears upon earth, and which now "crucifies" him "afresh," can be no amusement for you. Say, to all who taunt you with the discomforts of a life of faith and love to Christ, "We have bread to eat ye know not of." Say, to those who would withdraw you from your allegiance to Christ, and subject you to any other master, 'To whom should we go? He has the words of eternal life.' And, thus simply and faithfully cleaving to him, may his blessing prevent and follow you! May his promise to the church be fulfilled to yourself: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

SERMON V.

THE YOUNG RULER.

MARK x. 21, 22.

Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

It may have happened, to some of those to whom I am addressing myself on the present occasion, to have been introduced into the society of an individual calculated, in every way, to fix the eye and to attract the affections; to have gazed upon him with admiration and delight; but to have had that delight suddenly checked, by the intelligence that he carried about with him the seeds of some disease, which was conducting him painfully and rapidly to the grave. The pang with which such a case would be contemplated, is nearly allied to that with which we read the history of the young person in the text. So lovely and attractive, in many points, does he appear to have been, that it is said, "Jesus beholding him loved him." Nevertheless, he was the victim of an inward disease, so deep and destructive, that, unless a cure was wrought, of which we have no account in Scripture, it appears probable that he sank to his grave under the displeasure of God, and suffered the awful penalty of unpardoned transgression.

The facts of his history are at once so interesting and instructive that I feel anxious to enter into a somewhat particular examination of them; and, with this view, to consider,

I. His APPROACH TO OUR LORD.

II. The COMMUNICATION OF CHRIST WITH HIM.

III. His DEPARTURE FROM CHRIST.

1. In the first place, we are to consider the APPROACH OF THIS YOUNG PERSON TO CHRIST.

And here, perhaps the very mode of his approach, as indicating the earnestness of his desire to come to Christ, may not be thought altogether unworthy of notice. Although "a ruler," and therefore a person of some rank, it is said, "he *came running*" towards him. It is also stated, that, when he came nigh to Christ, he bowed himself in deep humility before him. It is likewise observable, that he addressed our Lord by the title of "good;" a title never applied in the Talmud, or any of the Jewish expositions of Scripture, except to God; and that he approached him, not, like too many of his countrymen, with some question of idle curiosity or ensnaring subtilty, but with an earnest application for instruction on the most important of all subjects. These circumstances bear a decisive testimony to the serious and reverential mind with which he accosted our Saviour. There is another, in which he stands favourably distinguished even from some sincere disciples of Christ. He did not, like Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea, honour him only in secret, or visit him under the veil of night; but drew nigh to him frankly and openly, as a man in search of truth, and neither afraid nor ashamed to be seen in the pursuit of it.

Observe the nature of the question which he asks: "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" This inquiry, far from being unreasonable, is the first and chief question which ought to be found upon the

lips of every man. For what avails to you and to me the adjustment of any other point, if the question of our eternal state is still undecided? Of what moment is it to know that the animal frame is so much stronger, or the worldly possessions so much larger, to-day than yesterday, if we are ignorant whether the soul has not gone backward in an equal proportion, and whether we are not at this instant standing on the edge of a miserable eternity? How unanswerable is the question, "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" With heaven or hell before us, *who* ought not, even with intense anxiety, to inquire by what means the one may be gained, and the other avoided?

From the circumstances, however, now enumerated, it is not difficult to judge of the case presented to us in the text. It is not that of the wild and reckless violator of the laws of God and man. Nor is it that of the man living only for the present moment, and disposed to purchase indulgence at any price. It is not that of the inconsiderate boy, who, in the extravagance of his levity, cannot find an instant for God and eternity; who is content to play away this life, and leave another to chance, or to the uncovenanted mercies of the Most High. Nor is it that of the poor coward in religion, who is ashamed to acknowledge even the little principle that he has. But it is that of a person moral, amiable, and attractive, anxious for instruction, and desirous to seek it where alone there appeared a probability of its being found,—from the lips of that extraordinary Teacher, who seemed evidently come from God—of the Man who spake as never yet man spake, and who did such works as no man could possibly do unless God were with him.

What, then, it may be asked, is the fault of this young and pleasing individual? I shall perhaps best reply to the question, by calling your attention to

II. The second point proposed to be considered; namely, THE COMMUNICATION OF OUR LORD WITH THIS YOUNG MAN.

1. It is said, in the first place, that when he proposed to our Lord the question, "*What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*" Jesus answered, "Thou knowest the commandments: Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother." In this reply our Lord instructs him, that a cordial desire and endeavour to comply with the will of God is necessary to salvation; and, in order to supply a specimen of the nature of the compliance expected, he gives him an abridgment of the commands of what is called the Second Table of the Law. According to St. Matthew, our Saviour prefaced this detail by saying, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." And, my brethren, let it never be forgotten, that if it be true, on the one hand, that by faith, and faith alone, the sinner is justified before God; yet it is equally true, that the faith which so justifies is a faith infallibly productive of obedience to the will of God. Morality, indeed, will of itself never save a soul; but no man can be saved whose faith does not prompt him to the vigorous and cordial discharge of all the duties of morality: "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

To this declaration of our Lord the young man replies, "*All these have I observed from my youth.*" And perhaps, in his view of the law of God, and looking only to the outward act, there may have been a measure of justice in his reply. He had never, perhaps, grossly and violently offended, especially against those laws which respect the conduct of man to man. It is even possible, that, as in the case of St. Paul, "touching the righteousness" that was in the ceremonial "law," he was blameless. But, looking at his obedience in a scriptural point of view, it is evident

that he was an offender as to some of those command ments on an implicit compliance with which he prided himself. His subsequent conduct sufficiently testifies that his obedience was rather that of the letter than of the spirit; rather that of the conduct than of principle; rather that of the hand than of the heart; rather adjusted to his own taste, than framed upon the model of Scripture. Besides, every act of his obedience was vitiated by the foul blot of a spirit of self-justification. He neither sought for pardon, nor, in his own esteem, needed it; for "all these things" he had "observed from his youth." And, my brethren, to this single offence of self-justification what other need be added? That spirit, however lightly regarded by men, is a temper of mind of all others the most hostile to the peculiar office of the Saviour, and to the whole genius of the Gospel. It was the crime probably of Cain, when he offered the fruits of the earth in sacrifice instead of the firstling of the flock. It was eminently the crime of the Pharisees, a body of men the most frequently and vehemently rebuked by our Lord. Nor can the offensiveness of this crime in the sight of God be a matter of surprise. The object of our blessed Redeemer, and of his dispensation, is to humble men; to exclude "boasting;" to lead the sinner to a religion of free grace and unmerited compassion; to a deep conviction, on the one hand, of the insufficiency of man, and, on the other, of the all-sufficiency of Christ. The spirit of self-justification, on the contrary, springs from pride, and largely ministers to it; claims as a right, what must be received as a gift; transforms the man, from a lowly supplicant at the Throne of Compassion, to the proud artificer of his own happiness; and, in its ultimate effects, dethrones the Saviour of sinners from his mercy-seat, and erects the sinner into his own redeemer. Let us, however, observe in what manner our Lord dealt with this pleasing though self-deluded person.

It is added, in the history before us, that "Jesus, *beholding him, loved him.*" In other words, he was struck with the many sweet and attractive qualities of his mind. Purity, docility, ingenuousness, justice, gratitude, benevolence—any, or all, of which qualities may have entered more or less into his character—are in themselves lovely and conciliating. They may indeed, in very considerable degrees, exist in the widest separation from religion; in which case they can be of no ultimate value to the possessor; but they are nevertheless attractive to the by-stander; of primary advantage to the possessor, as supplying a good basis for religious principle; and of large and substantial value to society.

In reply to the statement of this young person, that he had "kept" the commandments, our Lord, in order (as we may conceive) to convince him of his error and humble him before God, goes on to put him to the test as to a single duty connected with the commandments, on his obedience to which he thus confidently relied.

It is evident, that the state of heart which alone can enable us properly to fulfil any single duty to our neighbour, must dispose us to fulfil every command of God which has the benefit of our neighbour for its object. "*Go thy way,*" then, says our Lord, "*sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me.*"—Observe the nature of this command. It is as though our Lord had said, 'You think that you have religiously discharged every duty to your neighbour, and that, in fact, you love him even as yourself. If so, you are of course prepared to fulfil the whole will of God with regard to him. I command you, then, to renounce your property and rank in his favour; to sell what you have; to distribute the produce; to exchange the splendour of earth for present poverty and the rewards of heaven; to take

up the cross of daily mortification and self-denial, and preach to that world in whose well-being you are so deeply interested.'—Such was the test to which our Lord thought proper to bring the pretensions of his confident individual; and we know the success with which it was applied.

And here let me pause for a moment, to press upon my hearers the practical lessons which this part of our subject is so eminently calculated to convey.

I may be speaking to individuals, who, though not perhaps disposed to boast of any very exact discharge of what may be termed the direct duties of religion,—of any deep and undeviating attention to the study of the Scriptures, to private or family prayer, to the public worship of God, to the solemn and delightful services of the altar, to meditation, or communication upon spiritual subjects—yet are disposed both to contend vehemently for their own rigid observance of the laws of morality, and to rely confidently upon this supposed strictness as to one branch of the commandments. Now to such persons I may perhaps be permitted to say,—That, even admitting the justice of their own statement as to the strictness of their morality, they are yet to be considered as capital offenders against the law of God; for of all the higher and holier requisitions of that law they are utterly negligent. They are guilty of deriving all from God and rendering nothing to him; of living upon his bounty without in the smallest degree recognising his power and love; of standing amidst the wonders of creation without discovering the Master-hand which built the heavens, and spread the carpet of the earth; of trampling under foot the Blood of the Covenant, and doing despite to the Spirit of Grace. And can such individuals boast of their virtue? Can they conceive, that, where God is the judge, and his Bible the statute-book, and his bar the tribunal, and his angels the witnesses, and the point to be determined is not merely our conduct in the discharge of purely

secular duties, but our fitness for the world of spirits, for the society of the just made perfect, and for the presence of God and of Jesus Christ,—can they conceive, I say, that such a disposition of mind will be approved; and that they will be accepted, and invested in all the rights and privileges of the redeemed of God, of those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb?

But I would, moreover, say to these self-confident moralists, Is it clear that you are not, as in the case of the young person in the text, altogether deceived in your estimate even of that morality on which you so much rely? Is it founded upon a right principle, guided by a right rule, prompted by a right motive, and directed to right objects? Is it wide as the law of love, and the wants of human nature? Is it steady, consistent, generous, and self denying?—There is much misconception, my brethren, as to this point. Numerous are the individuals who think proper to weigh the purity of their morals against the blots in their religion, whose morality is perhaps as defective as their religion; who serve man little or no better than they serve God; who approach little or no nearer to loving their neighbour as themselves, than to loving God with all their heart. Whoever looks with a careful eye over the map of society, will find that the Christian is, after all, the only true moralist; that love to our Redeemer is the only sound basis for tenderness to his creatures; that what is called a mere moral man, is ordinarily a man of very poor morality; that, in order to cleanse his heart from selfishness, and narrowness, and insensibility, he must be washed in the Blood of Atonement, and baptized with the influences of the Spirit.

III. But look, thirdly and lastly, at THE DEPARTURE OF THIS YOUNG MAN FROM CHRIST. It is stated in the text, that "*he was sad at that saying*" of our Lord, "*and went away grieved, for he had great possessions.*"

—Here, my brethren, is an evidence of the accuracy of the statement which I have ventured to make, that the mere moralist is commonly a man of very low morality indeed; that the benevolence which has not a religious foundation, wants all the depth, and breadth, and consistency, which are so requisite amidst the conflicts and trials of a fallen world. Behold this young man quitting, in sorrow and disappointment, the presence of his Lord: He "*went away grieved.*" Possibly, had he been permitted to unite the services of God and mammon; to serve his neighbour without injuring himself; to shape his morals according to the conceptions of men, instead of the "pattern" of the sanctuary, he might have remained with Christ, and veiled a cold and conceited heart under the covering of a bright and showy religious profession. But the proposed test was of too decisive a character to allow of any such compromise. If mortification, and self-denial, and taking up the cross, and devoting himself body and soul to Christ, and sacrificing all for the benefit of others, are the only terms of church-fellowship and communion, then, however grieved at the result, he must quit the Saviour and cleave to the world.

But it is time, my Christian brethren, that I should endeavour, in conclusion, to make a brief application of this subject to several classes of hearers.

1. And, first, I must be permitted to address *the daring and profligate offender against God, if any such should chance to be found in this congregation.*—And of such a person I would ask, in the words of Scripture, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" If such individuals as the amiable and attractive young person in the history before us, are lost, what is to become of such characters as I am here supposing you to be? What is the new title to salvation which you have to present? What is the single passage of Scripture on which you

ground your hope of a happy eternity? I protest solemnly, that I am not acquainted with a passage warranting that hope; and that I can conceive no means by which the profane and unholy, the impenitent and ungodly, are to enter the kingdom of God, except by breaking down the barriers which Infinite Power and Wisdom have erected; except by proving the Scriptures to be false, and the God of the Scriptures unable to accomplish the awful predictions of his own book. Oh! would to God that such persons might be persuaded to take warning; to consider the peril of their circumstances; to humble themselves before God; to seek the washing of the blood of Christ, and the changing efficacy of his Spirit; to fly to the feet of that Heavenly Father, who even now is desirous to receive them; who is still stooping from his throne to take them into his favour, and make them his own for ever! "Return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity: take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously .... for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

2. I would next speak to *the individuals whose characters are more especially described in the text.*—Is it not possible, my brethren, that this assembly contains young persons such as him to whom our attention has been especially directed,—persons invested with all those qualities which attract and delight the by-stander; full of honour, and candour, and kindness; anxiously attentive to many of the duties of society,—persons whom it is difficult to see without loving, and without wishing to transfer many of their attractive qualities into our own character? What is the lesson which I am bound to urge from the text on such individuals? Learn from it, my brethren, this solemn truth, that you may have all these bright and conciliating qualities, and yet, if these be all, may everlastingly perish. Learn from it, that you may have all those

attractions which win the applause of the world, and yet, that, unless you "take up your cross" and "follow" Christ, unless you have the "mind which was in Christ Jesus," unless you are seeking redemption by his blood and the sanctification of your hearts by the influences of his Spirit, unless you are prepared to renounce all, and to all which God requires, yours, for the present, *is a lost state*; a state in which, if called to judgment, you would be disinherited of heaven, and dismissed to the place of the impenitent and unholy. How, then, can I with sufficient urgency call upon you also to flee from the wrath to come; to erect your morality upon the basis of religion; to be just to God as well as man; to add, to the qualities which fit you for civil, and social, and domestic life, those which can alone fit you for eternity? I can conceive no sight more delightful to God and his angels, than that of a young person, touched with the hatred of sin and drawn by the love of a Redeemer, bursting the bonds of passion and indulgence, approaching the altar of God, and consecrating himself to the service of the Saviour who died for him. O may such instances be multiplied in this place!—But let not the nature of this wish be mistaken. I am not calling you to sourness, or fanaticism, or eccentricity; but to sound, sober, serious, practical religion: to a religion, not of words but of deeds; not a name, but a substance; not a mere vision to delude the eye, but a "covenant ordered in all things and sure." I am calling you, in fact, to the only rational, because the only scriptural, religion; to the only religion worthy of a wise man, because framed by the hand of God himself, surrounded with his bright and blessed promises, calculated to give you consistency and dignity in this world of inconstancy and folly, and a glorious inheritance amidst the spirits of the blessed. I repeat the wish and prayer: May a God of mercy multiply such converts every day! And when the great "Shepherd makes up his folds for eternity,"

may not one of the younger members of this flock be wanting!

3. I would speak, finally, *to the true and consistent disciple of Jesus Christ.*—Many are the lessons, my brethren, which this subject will suggest to your minds. There is, however, only one of these lessons which I shall think it right to press upon your attention. If the love of money, or of any other worldly "possession," is able, as we have seen, to check a man in his first approaches to Christ, has it not, I would ask, a similar power to impede him in his further progress in spirituality, and to chain down the free spirit in its ascent to holiness and to God? My Christian brethren, our first enemies are often our last and our worst. The passions or desires which shaded the morning of life, are often those which darken the evening of our days. Beware, then, at every point in your progress, of the slightest relaxation in watchfulness and prayer. Let the loins be girt, and the lamp burning. Let the soldier of the Cross endure hardness, and put on the armour of God. Let the conflict with corruption, and with the great enemy, be continued, till you exchange war for triumph, watchfulness for repose, and difficulty and danger for everlasting joy in the kingdom of your Father. How glorious is the encouragement given to you! "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New-Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."

SERMON VI.

THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE GOOD AND THE BAD.

2 COR. x. 3.

Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.

NOTHING is more common than to hear men of worldly or disorderly lives allege the defects and infirmities of those more in earnest about religion than themselves as an apology for their own state and character. 'If we sin,' such individuals are apt to say, 'are we the *only* offenders? Do not the professed servants of Christ also transgress? where, then, is the difference between us?'—Instead, my Christian brethren, of replying summarily, and at once, to so important a question, I would call upon you to consider the language and bearing of the text.

It appears that certain false teachers, in the early ages of Christianity, anxious to lower the claims and authority of St. Paul, thought proper to adopt the mode of argument to which I have referred, with regard to the conduct and character of the Apostle. Observe, then, the method adopted by him in the text for meeting such an objection. He begins by admitting, to a certain extent, the truth of the allegation: '"*We walk*," 'he says, "*in the flesh*:" we are very weak creatures; 'many of the infirmities of the flesh cleave to us whither-

'soever we go, and whatsoever we undertake. But,' he may be supposed to add, 'if you design to ground 'upon this admission of the infirmities of the good, an 'affirmation that no real distinction exists between the 'servants of God and the followers of the world, I deny 'the justice of the conclusion; for, though we walk in 'the flesh, "*we do not war after the flesh.*" Even 'in our resistance to the unkindness and cruelty of our 'enemies, you may discern the existence of a different 'spirit, and the employment of different weapons: if 'we "walk in the flesh," or, in other words, feel its 'infirmities, yet "do we not war *after* the flesh," and 'obey its corruptions?'

But, as this distinction between the servants of Christ and of the world, however important in leading us to a right decision as to the state of our own souls, is not at first sight clear and palpable, it is my wish to come to a more distinct consideration of it in the following discourse, in which I purpose to examine,

I. WHAT IS CONCEDED BY THE APOSTLE in the text to his accusers, as to the general state and circumstances of the servants of Christ; and,

II. WHAT HE REFUSES TO CONCEDE to them.

I. In the first place, we are to inquire WHAT IS CONCEDED BY THE APOSTLE in the text, as to the general state and circumstances of the servants of Christ; or, in other words, what is meant by the expression, we "*walk in the flesh.*"

And here, it is evident, in the first place, that this expression does not mean the same thing as "walking *after* the flesh;" for, in the Epistle to the Romans, it is expressly said, that the servant of God "does not walk after the flesh," but "after the Spirit." In like manner, the expression does not signify the same thing with "*living* after the flesh;" for of such persons it is said, in the same chapter to the Romans, "they shall die," that is, their souls shall die eternally—a declaration

which cannot apply to the real follower of the Redeemer. The expression, therefore, plainly refers, not to the *corruptions of the bad*, but to the *infirmities of the good*; not to the general habits of those who are under the government of the flesh, or of our corrupt nature, but to the imperfections in the state, or occasional deviations in the practice, of those who are deliberately and habitually walking in the ways of faith, holiness, and duty.

Let us, then, endeavour to consider in what respects a real Christian may sometimes, according to this interpretation of the term, be found to "*walk in the flesh;*" or, in other words, *what are the infirmities which may sometimes be discovered in the individual who is nevertheless habitually and substantially the servant of God.*

1. In the first place, he "walks in the flesh" in this respect, that he is *subject to all the infirmities of the body.*—It is said, for instance, of Hezekiah, that he was "sick even unto death." The same fact is stated with regard to Onesiphorus. And Timothy is commanded to "take a little wine, on account of his often infirmities." It is plain, also, that even our Lord himself felt the trial of hunger, fatigue, and bodily pain. In short, it appears that no land of Goshen is provided for the servants of God, into which they may retire from any of those trials which properly belong to the body. It is stated, with regard to those in the earlier ages of the church "of whom the world was not worthy," that "they were stoned; they were sawn asunder; were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." And unless, as in our own privileged country, the wing of the laws is spread over the righteous, there is nothing in their general circumstances even now to shelter them from a renewal of these assaults on their happiness.

2. In the next place, the servant of God is liable to

error in judgment and opinion.—It is impossible to survey large numbers of those who must be admitted to be sincere and devout in the service of God, without perceiving that the heart may be sound without the head being strong or the judgment clear; that the affections may be alive and vigorous, while the powers of reasoning are weak and uncertain. Hence many of the errors and contests which weaken the authority or disturb the peace of the church of Christ. And it is plainly with reference to this species of infirmity in human nature, that the Apostle so tenderly exhorts his followers not to make a weak brother to offend, and not to become a "stumbling-block" to him; or, in other words, to be cautious in their general habits and intercourse, even with their fellow Christians, as having in many instances to deal with men of limited powers, with strong prejudices and stronger passions.

3. In like manner, the real Christian, as long as the connexion of "the flesh," or of the body and soul, continues, is subject to the assaults of *temptation.*—His passions and appetites are indeed brought under what may be termed habitual subjection: nevertheless, they rather sleep than are dead, and a mere touch will sometimes awaken them into life, and even into the most mischievous activity. It is one thing to *yield* to temptation, and another to be subject to its assaults, and even to feel its power. Abraham was tempted; Job was tempted; Peter was tried by his natural impetuosity; Paul, by a thorn in the flesh, which he calls "the buffetings of Satan." The Christian, indeed, ultimately conquers; but it is not a victory without a conflict, or without the frequent re-appearance of those enemies whom he imagined to be destroyed. How modestly and suspiciously does St. Paul speak of his own case! "Lest," he says in one place, "Satan get the advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices:" and in another, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means,

when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." Hence arises the value of that promise of Scripture, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations."

4. In like manner, the real servant of God is subject to *infirmities of temper and conduct*.—Look, for example, into the history of the Old Testament saints, and you cannot fail to be struck with the occasional deviations from the paths of holiness even in those to whose general state the highest testimony is borne. Observe, also, the temper and conduct of the disciples of Christ. Hear our Lord saying to them, on one occasion, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of;" on another, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Observe, also, in the account of the disciples even after the death of their Master, the timid compromises of Peter with the Jews; his unjust separation from the Gentile converts; and the contest between Paul and Barnabas on the subject of Mark. How do all these facts proclaim that they were "men of like passions" with ourselves, and were not, while in the flesh, altogether released from its influence and oppression.

5. In the first place, the real Christian is subject to infirmities even as to *those great principles and affections* which are nevertheless the governing powers of his soul.

What infirmity, for instance, is there in his *faith!*—Sometimes, indeed, it is clear and strong, like the full and deep tide of the mighty river: at others, perhaps it is shallow, irregular, and disturbed, like the scanty waters of the summer stream. Such, indeed, may be its variations, that the startled Christian, in some cases, scarcely knows what to conclude as to the real state of his own soul; and even in his best moments is disposed to pray, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

Look, again, at the *love* of the real servant of Christ.

At times, how ardent and active are his feelings; and at other times, how cold and sluggish! Such is frequently the rapid descent of the corrupt heart, that the man prepared to become a martyr at one moment, at another is apparently immoveable and heartless, indisposed to make the smallest sacrifice of self for God or for human nature.

Thus, also, the *hope* of the real Christian is often characterized by much infirmity.—To-day every promise is intelligible and bright in his eyes; the voice of God is, in a sense, audible; and a strong ray of expectation, and even of assurance, is shed over the prospect before him: the next day, perhaps, the consciousness of his guilt seizes upon his mind; his sky is clouded; "he walketh in darkness, and hath no light;" in the expressive language of the Scriptures, he "goes mourning all the day long."

In short, my Christian brethren, it is not too much to affirm, that there is no faculty of the inner man, no power, or disposition, or temper, or taste of the renewed soul, which does not at times feel the burden of the body. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other." How powerfully does St. Paul describe this conflict of the soul! "To will is present with me, but *how to perform that which is good* I find not:" "I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but *I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*"

Such, then, my Christian brethren, appears to be the meaning of the first clause of our text. And where is the real servant of God who is not ready, with the Apostle, to acknowledge the infirmities which cleave to his nature and practice? Who will not freely and fully adopt the language of the text, "We walk in the flesh?" Who will not say, We are poor, weak, erring, imperfect, and guilty creatures? "God be merciful to us sinners!"

But having made these concessions as to the state and circumstances of the good, does it follow, as some would pretend, that there is *no* distinction between the good and bad; between the servants of God and the servants of the world; between religion and irreligion? By no means. Let persons, thus disposed to confound the eternal distinctions of right and wrong, good and evil, consider the last clause of the text—"though we walk in the flesh" yet "*we do not war after the flesh*"—and is it not obvious, that, whatever are the infirmities of the good, there is still between them and the men of this world a broad, visible, and determinate line of distinction? Such a declaration, however, involves matters of too much importance to be received upon mere assertion. Let us, then, proceed, as was proposed,

II. Secondly, to consider IN WHAT THE DISTINCTION between the good and the bad CONSISTS; or, in other words, what is the meaning of that expression in the text, "*we do not war after the flesh.*"—And here let us, first, consider the difference between Christians and others as to the point especially referred to by the Apostle; and, afterwards, look at the subject in a more general point of view.

1. The Christian, then, says St. Paul, does not "*war after the flesh:*" in other words, he does not *contend with his opposers* in the spirit, or in the manner, in which they contend with him.—Look, for instance, at the great Head of the Christian church, when suffering under the tyranny and cruelty of his countrymen: He returns silence for insults; blessings for curses; deeds of mercy for deeds of blood. Look, again, at the first martyr to the religion of the Cross, offering, amidst the agonies of death, petitions for the pardon of his murderers. Listen, also, to the author of our text, when speaking of some who had added the crowning offence of apostacy from the Gospel to their personal

transgressions against himself: "I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." And such will be the distinction of temper and conduct in every case of conflict between the servant of Christ and of the world. He will return forgiveness for injury; mildness for violence: if his enemy hunger, he will feed him; if he thirst, he will give him drink: he will forbear and forgive, as he hopes to be forgiven of God.

2. But it is my wish, as has been already stated, to extend this inquiry to the more *general* points of distinction between the real Christian and the followers of the world.—And, here, it is not too much to affirm, that as to *no one* point will the real servant of God habitually walk, think, live "after the flesh," or according to the temper, principles, or habits of those who are governed by the "flesh" instead of being governed by the Spirit of the Lord.

In the first place, *holiness in a servant of God is habitual;* sin is occasional and rare.—The real Christian is ordinarily right, and only occasionally wrong; whereas others are habitually wrong, and only occasionally right. The faults of a Christian are exceptions to the general rule of his life; the faults of others are conformity to the rule itself. Hezekiah was betrayed into an act of vanity; Herod, we may conceive, was habitually vain.

In the second place, the real Christian, and the real Christian alone, *mourns over his sins as so many acts of ingratitude and disobedience to God.*—It is almost a folly to speak of the man of the world as mourning for sin at all; but if he does grieve, it is rather for property consumed, for character forfeited, for health destroyed, than for his resistance to the will of God. He stands in the midst of this garden of the Lord, feeds on his hand, walks in his presence, rests under the wings of his tenderness, and yet sins against Him without a single pang of heart. The real servant of God, on the contrary, when he offends, mourns, and mourns deeply;

and the chief cause of his grief is the sense of his ingratitude to the Lord who made him, and to the Saviour who has redeemed him by his blood: "Against Thee, *Thee only*, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." The sense of his baseness to such a Benefactor, the fear of separation from the Lord of light, and love, and glory, are to him intolerable burdens. "Mine eye poureth out tears unto God;" "I water my couch with tears;" "My tears have been my meat night and day;" "I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me;" "I go mourning all the day." What language is this, my brethren! And when did any other mourners approach the Lord with language full of such pathos and meaning, with tears drawn from a fountain of sorrow as deep and as bitter? O the anguish of a soul thus rent by the arrow of contrition! O the joy which the promises of God impart to a heart thus troubled! How natural, to the man thus comforted, is the language, "I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy, for thou hast considered my trouble:" "The Lord is my strength and shield: My heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth:" "I will go unto the altar of God, of God my exceeding joy."

In the third place, the Christian, and the Christian alone, *carries his sins to the cross of Christ for pardon.* —Where the burden of sin is not felt, there can be little anxiety for release from it. The heart which is deeply wounded will alone cry out, "Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there?" None but the real Christian can justly estimate the eagerness of the Christian to reach the great Deliverer. "God forbid," is the language of a man in this frame of mind, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!" And his daily struggle is to approach that cross with abasement, and sorrow, and tenderness of heart; and plead for pardon even as the prisoner sues for existence at the hand of his conqueror. Peace

without pardon, is as impossible to him as life without sustenance. In this conviction he watches, and labours, and prays, till he has won Christ, and is found in him; till he is washed by the blood, strengthened by the intercession, and wrapped around as it were in the righteousness of his Redeemer.

In the fourth place, the Christian, and the Christian alone, is *carrying his corruptions to the Spirit of God for correction and sanctification.*—Another man may admit the deficiencies or excesses of his conduct; but neither has he any conception of the real standard of Gospel purity, nor any real desire to elevate his conduct to it. The true Christian, on the contrary, "feels every stain" in his own practice "like a wound;" places before himself the highest standard, the standard of Scripture; and the most perfect model, the character of the Redeemer. In his estimation, the slightest deviation from that standard, or model, is sin. And, feeling the impossibility of escaping even the grossest delinquencies by his own strength, he goes from hour to hour to the Spirit of God for correction and instruction in righteousness; for a "renewed heart;" for a Christian temper; for a "sound mind;" for the "Spirit of grace and supplication;" for stronger love; for clearer faith; for brighter hopes; for the mind that was in Christ, a spirit of self-devotion to God, and of charity wide as the wants and miseries of human nature. He "goes from strength to strength, till he appears before the God of gods in Zion."

And, finally, the Christian, and the Christian alone, is *obtaining a daily and visible conquest over his corruptions.*—He is daily pressing toward the mark; "going on unto perfection;" "abounding more and more;" approaching nearer to the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" rescuing at every step of his progress a new portion of his character from the waste, and clothing it with verdure and fruitfulness. The corruptions of the men of the world, because left to

themselves, or nursed up in the cradle of self-indulgence, are daily gaining strength; and, like the cloud seen by the Prophet, if at first the size of a man's hand, at length cover and darken the whole sky. The corruptions of the Christian, on the contrary, are like the fig-tree withering under the curse of the Redeemer. Every day sees the servant of the world fitter for perdition; every day sees the believer riper for glory: till, at last, the voice of judgment is heard, and the one passes away to misery, and the other to unchangeable triumph and joy.

But, my brethren, it is time that our observations on this part of Scripture should be brought to a close. And I would do this by offering two remarks, which appear to follow almost in the way of natural consequence from what has gone before.

1. In the first place, if such are the infirmities even of the acknowledged servants of God, how necessary is it that men, in every stage of their religious progress, *should acknowledge their weakness and worthlessness, and cast themselves on the compassion of God for pardon and grace!* It might be thought that the individual, sensible that he owed his first successes in religion to the power and grace of God, would feel no disposition to erect the standard of independence, and withdraw himself from the shield of his earliest protector and friend. And yet how apt is presumption to follow close on the footsteps of success; and the conflict begun in lowliness, to be continued, if continued at all, in arrogance and pride! Learn, my brethren, one of the lessons of Scripture the most strongly and emphatically inculcated,—that He who is the "Author" must be the "Finisher" of our salvation. "Boasting," and self-dependence, and self-complacency, are excluded, not only in one stage, but in all stages, positions, and periods of the Christian life. "By grace ye are saved," is the inscription wrought on the banner of the Cross

by the Lord of God himself; and he who would rashly and presumptuously exchange the term "grace" for "merit" shall rue the exchange through all the ages of eternity. The brute usurping the office of man, or man usurping the functions of angels, is not a sight more preposterous in the sight of God and the spirits who surround his throne, than that of the fallen sinner arrogating to himself the functions and offices of Him who is called the "Lord our Righteousness."—Thou poor impenitent creature, if indeed thou art resolved to be thine own redeemer, thy mere infirmities, to say nothing of thy corruptions, must be thy ruin. But if, renouncing thy pretensions, thou wilt accept as a gift what thou canst not claim as a debt, and seek from Christ what thou canst not achieve for thyself, I am commissioned, as the ambassador of God, to say to thee, That no infirmities, compatible with an honest heart, with a tender conscience, with a thirsting, seeking, contrite, believing soul, shall shut thee out from the joys of thy Father's kingdom. Turn, then, to the Lord, that he may have mercy upon thee.

2. In the second and last place, if the points of *distinction between a servant of God and a servant of the world are as many and great as we have seen, let no man who has not the marks of a Christian lay any claim to his name and to his privileges.*—Am I speaking to any who are coming rashly, and without a scriptural warrant, to the conclusion that they are the real servants of God? I would earnestly and affectionately entreat them to consider the bearing of the previous observations upon their case. It is admitted that a good man may have some infirmities in common with yourselves; but the question is, whether you have the habitual faith, love, and holy obedience, the self-denial, the self-renunciation, the self-devotion, which are the essential characteristics of the real Christian? Have you the "mind that was in Christ Jesus?" Are you a follower of his Apostles, as far as they were followers of their

Lord? Awful, most awful is the delusion of those who, because real Christians may chance to have some of their own faults, instantly fancy in themselves all the qualities of a Christian. If you are Christ's indeed, you are "new creatures in Christ Jesus;" you have "crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts;" you have "come out from the world, and are separated from it;" you "love him who first loved you," and you love his creatures for his sake. The difference, which is a gulf in eternity, must be something more than an invisible line here. Strive, then, and pray, to be clearly on the right side of the line of separation. Let no honest eye find a difficulty in discovering to which party you belong. And when the voice of God demands, "Who is on the Lord's side?" reply, without hesitation, "I would be thine in life, thine in death, thine through all the ages of eternity." May that wish of your hearts, my brethren, be accomplished! May God be a father to you; and may you "be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty."

SERMON VII.

ON PROVIDENCE.

LUKE xii. 7.

Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

THE doctrine of a *particular providence*—or the doctrine that the great God who governs the universe is constantly employed in the minute inspection and regulation of the affairs of individuals—though obscurely intimated in the writings of some of the ancient heathen, is taught no where with clearness and authority except in the pages of the Bible. And need I say, what a treasure such a truth is to a poor creature who has discovered, by bitter experience, his total inability to guide and to govern himself? Well might a monarch and philosopher of antiquity, even when surrounded by all the splendour and power of the highest authority, exclaim, 'What happiness could I find in a world without God and Providence!'

But this doctrine, connected as it is with the most secret operations and dealings of an infinite and an invisible God, is, from its very nature, encumbered with considerable difficulties. And, accordingly, few truths have been more mistaken or abused; and none, perhaps, mistaken or abused to more mischievous purposes. May I not, then, hope for your attention, while I endeavour, in dependence upon the Divine

blessing, to touch upon some of the errors which have led to these deplorable consequences?

I. In the first place, let us consider what may be called THE UNBELIEVING, OR SCEPTICAL, VIEW OF THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

There are those, for example, who, although they admit that God made the world, conceive that no sooner was the work of creation accomplished than he ceased to take any interest in this production of his hands;—that, instead of exercising any direct influence over it, or bestowing on it any specific attention, he appointed certain general *laws*, by which it was henceforth to be governed;—that, in consequence of this arrangement, what must be, will be, and an irreversible fate prescribe and determine the destiny of the millions of mankind. Of this cheerless and wretched scheme of things, it is scarcely necessary for me to say that it is opposed to the whole language and spirit of the Book of God. Every page of that sacred volume represents the Divine Being as awake to all the concerns of his creatures; as knowing all things, and controlling every movement in his own universe. "The Lord," it says, "is a God of knowledge; and by him actions are weighed:" "All things are naked to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do:" "The Lord knoweth them that are his:" "His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings." But why should I multiply passages on so plain a point? The notion to which I have alluded is little short of practical atheism. 'Better,' said a distinguished Grecian writer, in touching upon a similar question, 'say there is no such man as Plutarch, than admit him to exist and represent him as he is not.' And better, we might almost add, is it to deny the existence of a God altogether, than to admit his existence and then divest him of his noblest attributes, shut him out of his own creation, and refuse to acknowledge his fatherly interest in

those whom he first formed with his hand, and has since ransomed with the blood of his own Son. The language of one divinely instructed in the mysteries of the Divine nature is, "Thou hast searched me, and known me: Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, and understandest my thoughts afar off: Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways."

II. In the second place, let us notice what may be called THE NARROW AND PARTIAL VIEW OF THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE.

And surely these epithets may justly be applied to that view of it which, while it admits the doctrine of a *general*, denies the doctrine of a *particular*, providence; which, while it allows that God interferes in the history of *nations*, denies his interference in the case of *individuals*; or which, while it admits his interposition in the larger or more *general* events of a man's history, denies it in each *particular* and minute incident of our daily life.

Of this view of the doctrine, I may, in the first place, once more ask, whether it has in the smallest degree *the warrant of Scripture?* Listen to the language of our Lord himself: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and yet not one of them is forgotten before God:" "Give us this day our daily bread:" "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things:" "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." And these quotations are but a sample of those scattered throughout the volume of inspiration. Whatever, therefore, be the foundation of this hypothesis, it is evident that it has not the sanction of the word of God.

But, in the next place, is not the doctrine of a particular providence *taught by every part of the works of God* with which we are acquainted?—In surveying the face of nature, do we not find every spot pregnant

with some evidence of the care and vigilance of the great Father of the universe? Is not every insect constructed, and every flower tinged and scented, with an attention as minute and exquisite as though the skill and labour distributed over the whole surface of the creation were confined to this particular object?

And, again, is the reason which is sometimes alleged for denying the doctrine of a particular providence, that it is *a degradation of the nature of God*, in the smallest degree founded in truth?—If, indeed, the attention of the Divine Being to what is little, involved, as it sometimes does in the case of man, a neglect of what is great, the objection might have some weight. But look at the case as it really stands. If the monarch of any particular country, at the same time that he regulated, without an effort, the general movements of his empire, and subjected all its master-spirits to his will, could enter into the distinct cases, and wants, and feelings of his various cottagers, would not our admiration of his powers be much increased by this evidence of their extent and diversity? And ought not the same rule to be applied in reasoning upon the nature and attributes of the great Ruler of the universe? Is it a degradation of the Divine nature to maintain, that, whilst the power of God stretches over the regions of infinite space, creates and extinguishes worlds at his pleasure, rolls the planets in their spheres, or roots up the mountains from their deep foundations; that, whilst "hell is naked before him, and destruction has no covering," and "the pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof;" his eye is fixed upon the meanest individual who inhabits the smallest orb which steals along the face of the skies, and that he watches every thought of his heart, and guides every movement of his hand? Is it, in like manner, a degrading conception of God, to imagine that the same Mind which controls by a wish the powers and principalities of heaven,—all that innumerable company which sur-

rounds the Throne,—also counts every hair of the head, and regulates the flight of every sparrow of the field? Surely, my brethren, the statements which are calculated to disparage the character of God, are those which affirm that an attention to small concerns must of necessity divert his attention from the greatest; which proceed upon the supposition, that there are such things as great and small in his eyes; that it is not as easy to Him to wield a world as to destroy an insect; and that, in opposition to the affirmations of Scripture, he does not count "the nations as the drop of a bucket," "measure the waters in the hollow of his hand," and "take up the isles as a very little thing?" To a reasonable mind, the minuteness of the Divine government is precisely the circumstance which gives the last finish to its perfection; which prompts us to say, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect:" "Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!" "The great, the mighty God, the Lord of Hosts, is his name." Far, then, my Christian brethren, from your heart and mine be the suspicion, that there is a concern of our lives too minute for the inspection and superintendence of the great Being we love and serve. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows;" and yet "one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father." May this minuteness of his care be the confidence and joy of your souls! It is because, sleeping or waking; sitting in the house, or journeying by the way; in the hours of business or of solitude, of joy or misery, of health or sickness; amidst the circle of our friends, or in the awful hour when those friends are snatched away; when embarked in the high enterprises of life, or nursing a little infant up to manhood, or smoothing the pillow of sickness and decrepitude;—it is because, *at all times, and in all places*, He is present to guide, to console, to help, to bless, to save, that our heart takes courage; that we say, we are "not alone, because the Father is with us;"

we will not fear, because "He shall never leave us nor forsake us:" "This God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death."

III. In the third place, I proceed to consider what may be called A BLIND AND INDISCRIMINATE VIEW OF THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

The particular error to which I now allude is exemplified in that exclamation, so frequently in the mouths of multitudes, '*All is for the best.*' It is true indeed, that, if this maxim is designed to apply to the whole dispensations and purposes of God, and especially to the grand objects of promoting his own glory and accomplishing the salvation of a lost world, "all *is* for the best,"—"all things" are tending ultimately to the establishment of the Divine glory; and all are "working together for good to them that love God." There is not, as to these points, an apparent evil which is not a real good; nor is there an act, or what is called an accident, but which, under the touch of Omnipotence, ministers to the grand and mysterious schemes of the Divine will. "All the trees of the field shall know that I, the Lord, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish. I, the Lord, have spoken and have done it."

But if, on the contrary, it is meant by the maxim, "All is for the best," that every interference of Divine Providence is designed for the express benefit and comfort of every particular individual, *be he who or what he may*, then, by such a maxim, we are surely laying the foundation for the most fatal errors as to large numbers in society. Remember the distinction pointed out in a passage to which I have already referred: "All things," says the Apostle to the Romans, "work together for good *to them that love God.*" But what pledge is given that all things, or even that any

one thing, shall tend to the benefit of the wicked? On the contrary, in the case of those who neglect God and the Saviour; who feel nothing of that love which ought to be the governing passion of the soul; who love sin, or the world, or self, better than God; every page of Scripture instructs us that the various incidents of life are to be regarded as so many ministers of the wrath and vengeance of God, and as coming armed for the destruction of the impenitent. Is it "*for the best*," in the case of the sinner, when he prospers, and is thereby hardened in his abominations? Is it for the *best*, when, in the midst of his sins, he is suddenly cut down, and dismissed to the lake which burns with unquenchable fire? Let an individual in such a state look honestly and carefully at his own circumstances, lest the language of the world on this subject should delude him. Doubtless, there is a way of return, even for the worst, to the bosom and friendship of God. Doubtless, the great Father of his creatures is waiting to receive you; the Son of God is willing to cleanse you with his own blood; the Spirit of God desires to convert and to sanctify you. The language of one Testament is, "Why will ye die?"—the language of the other, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." But whilst you harden your neck against reproof; whilst you persist in rejecting the offers of grace; whilst you trample under foot the blood of the covenant, and "do despite to the Spirit of Grace," nothing is to be considered as, in your case, necessarily for the best. God is your enemy; the sentence of death is upon you; the arrows of wrath are pointed at your bosom. You are even now on the edge of a gulf which, unless you flee from the wrath to come, will open to swallow you up for ever. Whilst the poor penitent may hope every thing; may cast himself into the arms of his Lord without a doubt or fear; may cry out, "Lord, save us, we perish," with a confidence that his Lord will save him, and that "he shall never

perish;" your present portion is distraction and fear, and, if unchanged, your future destination the region of unchangeable wrath and misery.

IV. Let us notice, fourthly, what may be called AN ENTHUSIASTIC VIEW OF THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.—The error to which I especially allude, is that into which persons of warm imaginations have sometimes been betrayed, of conceiving themselves privileged to understand and interpret all the particular designs of Providence, in each particular incident and occurrence of life. Hence, where they did not originate in imposture, sprang the system of augurs and omens among the ancient heathen. Hence the supposed power, claimed by some persons at the present moment, of interpreting dreams; of reading the various signs in heaven and earth. Does a person of this class light upon a particular passage of Scripture, he immediately assumes his eye to have been directed to it with the express view of determining his line of conduct in the precise plan with which he is at that moment occupied. Does a thunder-storm shake the sky, it is received as an intimation to seek or avoid a particular person or object. The first, and most distinguished, of the English free-thinkers—for even free-thinkers may be enthusiasts—was determined upon the publication of one of the most mischievous volumes which ever issued from the press, by a real or supposed noise in the clouds upon an evening of apparent serenity. And other such instances might be adduced. In short, to the mind of a person living under this delusion, every movement in heaven or earth, every circumstance or appearance, has a voice and meaning which is intelligible, at least to himself.—Need I dwell upon the evils to which such a notion leads? Does it not give the most unbridled license to the imagination? Does it not almost necessarily lead to the wildest extravagance of conduct? Does it not, moreover, suppose the insufficiency of

Scripture? This last consideration, without any other, is decisive. The language of God is, "This is my beloved Son, hear him:" and whatever prompts us to turn from the Son of God to any other teacher, to signs *without* or to fancies *within*, is at once opposed to Scripture, and dangerous to our souls.

V. The last ERROR which I shall notice on the subject of Providence, is that of conceiving that WORLDLY PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY are respectively the appointments of Divine Providence TO REWARD THE GOOD AND TO PUNISH THE WICKED in this state of being.

Such appears to have been the error of the friends of Job, when they said, "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent, or where were the righteous cut off?" Such, as David himself tells us, was his own error for a time: "I was envious .... when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." Such was that of the individuals who attributed to their peculiar guilt the fate of those persons whose blood "Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices," or on whom "the tower of Siloam fell." And how common is the same error! Does a man *succeed* in some, perhaps doubtful, employment?—the success is at once assumed to be a token of Divine approbation. Does another man *fail?*—his failure is considered as an evidence of the Divine displeasure. Now, my brethren, this error is founded upon a double misapprehension: in the first place, that this world is the appointed place of reward and of punishment; and, secondly, that worldly prosperity is necessarily a reward, and that worldly adversity is necessarily a punishment. But can any notions have less the warrant of Scripture? Is it not the fact, that in some cases the life of the righteous, from the moment he enters the desert of this earthly pilgrimage till he touches the borders of the promised land, is darkened by a succession of outward calamities and trials? Is it

not equally the fact, that many a profligate man appears to receive no single outward check to his wickedness on this side the grave?—In like manner, how erroneous are the conceptions which prevail as to the real character of worldly prosperity and adversity! Is that success to be considered as a blessing to any individual which aggravates every evil in his character; which kindles the passions, unbridles the lusts, and throws down the barriers that oppose his progress to deeper profligacy and ruin? On the other hand, is that disappointment or sorrow to be regarded as an evil, which arrests, softens, humbles, moderates, spiritualizes? which dissolves the connexion with the world, and forces the sinner upon his God? which fixes the wavering, sobers the giddy, and carries the self-confident, as a convicted, subdued, contrite believer, to the foot of the Cross? Inaccurate, indeed, are the estimates of the world on these subjects. The extent of that inaccuracy we may never be able to discern, till we see by the light of the Throne, and judge by the rules of the eternal sanctuary. But it is easy to believe, that one of the subjects of astonishment in the world of spirits will be the depth of our infatuation in this state of being on the subject of good and evil. May a God of mercy rescue us from it before it is too late, before we have sunk into final impenitence and destruction!

But I must now, my Christian brethren, be permitted, in conclusion, to remind, 1st, *the ungodly*, and, 2dly, *the servants of God*, of the practical bearing of this subject upon their own cases.

1. And, first, let me ask *the ungodly* whether, if the providence of God be as minute as we have seen, there is a ground of hope that a single sinful thought, action, or word will escape the scrutiny of this all-seeing Judge? An invisible Presence; a Spectator who sees without being seen; an Eye which discovers all things, without being itself discovered;—all these things are so strange,

and even unintelligible to creatures in our circumstances, that it is difficult for the mind, in the first instance, to reconcile itself to the statements of Scripture on the subject. Nevertheless, my brethren, the fact is as indisputable even as that of your own existence, that the Eye "which is as a flame of fire" follows us every where; that it has pursued us into every haunt of sin during every past moment of our lives; that its broad and terrible beam is upon us at this instant; that to the great Judge every secret thought is as visible as the most palpable object of sense to ourselves. What is the effect which the bare enumeration of such truths ought to have upon us? Surely that of awakening us to a spirit of watchfulness, corresponding with the vigilance of the Master we serve, and under whose inspection we live and move.—Suppose this corruptible body dissolved, and yourself translated into the presence of the great God, should you, in your present state, shrink from the scrutiny of that awful Eye; should you call on the rocks and the hills to cover you from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne? Then call upon them now; for that Eye is at this moment searching into the secrets of your soul, and they shall soon be proclaimed to assembled worlds by the trumpet of the archangel. But, rather, let me say to you, Seek mercy before the day of mercy is expired: call upon the Lord for pardon and grace: ask him to wash you in "the Blood which cleanseth from all sin;" to clothe you in the righteousness of the Redeemer; to sanctify you by the influences of the Spirit; to "take away the heart of stone," and give you "a heart of flesh,"—a heart which can feel and love, and which will prompt you to penitence and faith, and unhesitating and unchanging conformity to the will of God, and to the mind which was in Christ Jesus. There is a Redeemer who is "exalted to give repentance" to the guilty and the miserable, and who can even now "present you spotless" in the presence of the great King. There is an

"Advocate with the Father;" a "Propitiation for the sins of the whole world;" a Saviour who, to snatch you from death, himself died the death of pain and infamy. Apply to him for all the privileges and immunities, and costly and immeasurable blessings, purchased by his own blood; and may you hear a voice from heaven saying to you, "Thy sins are forgiven thee: go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

2. Finally, let me speak *to the real servants of God.* —To you I would say, If it is a fact which admits of no dispute, that "every hair of the head is numbered," and that the scrutiny even into the most obscure circumstances of our condition is thus minute, must we not believe that every prayer and desire, every secret breathing of the soul for pardon, every faint struggle for advancement, every movement by which the heart presses nearer to the cross of a Saviour, is also known and registered, and treasured up in the memory and affection of the great Father of this fallen world? It is one of our many errors, my Christian brethren, to judge of God by ourselves; to conceive that the same distinctions of great and little which prevail in our own mind must prevail in his; and that, therefore, whilst the collected prayers and anthems of a crowded assembly may possibly find their way to his Mercy-seat, the solitary supplications of a poor Missionary on the dark mountains of idolatry, or of the cottager in his lowly hut, will never reach the throne of compassion and love. But "the hairs of your head are all numbered." The accents of a single voice find as free an access to God as the voice of thousands. Moses in the ark of bulrushes, Joseph amidst the myriads of Egypt, Elijah and Daniel amidst nations of idolaters, lived as completely in the eye of God as the countless multitudes with whom they were intermingled. And such are your own circumstances, if you are a real servant of God. It is not only that the angels of God behold

you, and rejoice over one sinner that repenteth; the God of those angels beholds you, and spreads the wing of his mercy over you, and follows you, as the miraculous stream the march of the Israelites, through every step of your pilgrimage. Let, then, your song be, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." While I speak, He looks on you from his throne in the heavens. Live as the children of this ever-watchful Parent. Let your gratitude and love be as unceasing as his tenderness. Let *your* eye also be awake to the minutest demands of duty, and the multiplied necessities of human nature. Others may discern in the pilgrimage of life few snares or dangers, few calls to mercy, few motives to prayer. Let your vigilance go forth with you into every spot and every employment; and when the voice asks, "Watchman, what of the night?" be able to answer the question as one who has not slumbered on his post, or forgotten under whose banner he fights. The Lord condescends to call for your assistance. The state of the world abundantly requires it. "Watch; for ye know not the hour at which the Son of Man cometh."

SERMON VIII.

THE LOSS OF THE SOUL.

MATT. xvi. 26.

What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

THE disciples of our Lord had long indulged the most unwarranted expectations of the establishment of an earthly kingdom, of which he should be the Sovereign, and themselves the chief authorities and ministers. At length, in a solemn and affecting communication with them, he employed language on the subject which it was scarcely possible to mistake: "He began," it is said, "to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." To this statement he adds, that they themselves, instead of sharing with him in the splendour of an earthly throne, must be satisfied to endure poverty, and hatred, and persecution: "If any man will come after me, let him .... take up his cross and follow me." But then, as though anxious to relieve them from the startling and depressing influence of such intelligence, he proceeds, in the words of the text, to state to them the great rule by which, after all, the comforts and evils of life are to be estimated. "What," he asks, "is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" In other

words, 'Is not a life of trial which leads to heaven, 'better than a life of splendour and indulgence which 'leads to perdition? What is there in the pleasures 'of sin, which can be set even for a moment against 'the horrors of eternal condemnation?'

Such is the general connexion in which the text stands. Its intrinsic importance may well recommend it to our most earnest and devout consideration. In examining it, my wish is,

I. Briefly to sketch THE CHARACTER OF SOME OF THOSE WHO MAY BE SAID TO PURSUE THE PRESENT WORLD AT THE EXPENSE OF THEIR SOULS.

II. To consider WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE LOSS OF THE SOUL.

III. To call your attention to THE FOLLY OF THUS SACRIFICING THE SOUL TO GAIN THE WORLD.

I. In the first place, it will be my endeavour briefly to sketch THE CHARACTER OF SOME OF THOSE WHO MAY BE SAID TO PURSUE THE PRESENT WORLD AT THE EXPENSE OF THEIR SOULS.

The Apostle St. John, in speaking of the present world as distinguished from the church of God, states, that "all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." The persons, therefore, making the sacrifice to which the text refers, may be considered, generally, as those who sacrifice the favour of God, and therefore the welfare of their souls, to the *pleasures*, the *interests*, and the *honours* of the present life. Let us notice each of these cases.

1. Consider, first, the case of those intensely occupied with the pursuit of *the pleasures and indulgences* of the world.—It will readily be admitted, by every candid examiner, that unscriptural notions have sometimes prevailed upon this subject. Some individuals, for instance, have shrunk from the indulgences of friendship, taste, or science, even when pursued and

enjoyed under the strictest regulations. Others have even deemed it necessary to shut their eye on the great volume of nature, and thus to retire from the contemplation of those beauties and glories by which this fair, though fallen, world invites us to do homage to the Father of the universe. For them, in vain does the moon walk in brightness, or the sun awake as a giant to run his course, or the stars spread their glittering canopy over a benighted world. All pleasure, in fact, which is not drawn as immediately and exclusively from the great Fountain of joy, as that of the spirits in glory, is considered by such individuals as superfluous, if not indeed criminal.—Of opinions thus extravagant, gloomy, and opposed to the letter and spirit of the word of God, I would by no means become the advocate. It is no crime, my Christian brethren, to be happy in this state of being. The language of the Apostle is, "Rejoice....; and again I say, rejoice." The crime is either in seeking happiness from wrong sources, or in so eagerly drinking at the streams of earthly joy which the bounty of God has opened to us, as to forget or neglect the Fountain where alone the soul can be satisfied. If, indeed, we are seeking happiness in vice, in dissipation, or in folly; if the favour of God is not felt to be our chief joy; if amusement is the leading object of our lives; if our enjoyments are opposed to our duties; if either their quality or quantity be such as to seduce the soul from God, or impair the energy of religious principles and affections; then are we incurring the censure of the text, are bartering the soul for our indulgences, and are gaining the world at the expense of everlasting happiness.

2. Consider, next, the case of those who are pursuing, with the like intenseness, *the interests* of this life. —Here, also, it is to be premised, that a reasonable regard to our own worldly interest, and that of others connected with us, is not condemned in Scripture. On the contrary, we are commanded in Scripture to

"be diligent in business;" to "work with our own hands;" to "get our own bread:" and "he who provides not for his own," is spoken of as "worse than an infidel." But if these worldly interests are pursued with feverish anxiety, from wrong motives, or by wrong means; if they are the main objects for which we labour; if their pursuit is connected with disobedience to the will of God, with the breach of the Sabbath, the neglect of spiritual duties, of private prayer, of the reading of Scripture, of the public ordinances of religion; then the supposition of the text is realized,—the world is gained, but the soul is lost; the earthly interest is secured, but at the price of everlasting happiness.

3. In like manner, the Scripture does not demand the austere rejection of *worldly honours*.—Rank and natural influence, if it be the pleasure of the Most High to bestow them, are to be received with gratitude, and consecrated to the glory of the Giver, and to the benefit, temporal and spiritual, of his creatures. Thus, also, the honours with which it pleases the wise or the good in this world, in some instances, to crown the brow of the able and laborious in the various departments of human exertion, or science, or discovery, are not to be rudely or superstitiously rejected. If, however, mistaking the means for the end, we sit down satisfied with the possession of reputation or influence, without considering the objects to which they are to be dedicated; if worldly honours are the main objects of desire; if the pursuit of them be connected with envy, fretfulness, or ambition, with the commission of sin, or the neglect of duty; if, in struggling for the corruptible crown, the love of God, of the Redeemer, of heavenly things, and of one another, is suffered to decline; and, in wearing it, the lowliness of the Gospel spirit is sacrificed; this again is to incur the condemnation of the text, and to seek or gain the world at the expense of the immortal soul.

Such, my Christian brethren, is the brief sketch which our limits will allow me to place before you of the character of those who are sacrificing the soul to the objects of sense and passion. But does not even this description show us the value of the text? Does it not, also, present to us a most affecting view of the condition of large multitudes in society? If this shifting and perishing world were all; if the soul were destined to lie down with the body; if the visions of Judgment and of everlasting wo were but the fictions of a distempered imagination; then might we be satisfied to see men strut their hour upon the stage of life, and sink into the grave utterly unprepared for any thing beyond it. But if the soul be imperishable; if the Judgment shall be set, and the books opened, and all men be judged according to the deeds done in the body; then it is impossible to contemplate without awe and horror the condition of many, crowned perhaps with the honours of life, or surrounded by its pleasures, whose hopes and objects evidently terminate here; who go to the bar of God without any preparation for it; who offer no prayer for pardon or conversion; to whom the Gospel is a nullity; and who blink the question of Judgment, till they awake amidst the thunders of the great day, and see face to face the Being they have resisted or despised.

But that these awful topics may be more deeply impressed upon the mind, let us proceed, as was proposed,

II. To consider more distinctly WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE LOSS OF THE SOUL.

And, here, it must at once be admitted, that the veil drawn over the future and eternal world is too thick to be completely penetrated by the eye of man. But a few observations, 1st, on the nature and value of the human soul, and, 2dly, on the nature of the last penalty to be inflicted upon it, as far as that penalty is

described in Scripture, may serve to illustrate the important subject to which our attention is directed.

1. In contemplating, then, the first of these points—viz. the *nature and value of the soul of man*, consider,

In the first place, *its intrinsic excellence and dignity.*—Call to mind, for instance, its various faculties, passions, affections, and powers; its capacities of joy and sorrow; its large comprehension; its lively sensibility; and, above all, its *eternal* duration, a quality which in itself confers upon it a higher dignity than all the assemblage of qualities which can be congregated in all the objects of mere time and sense.

Consider, in the next place, *the price paid, and that by Divine appointment, for the redemption of the soul.*—"Sacrifice... and burnt-offering for sin Thou wouldest not... but a body hast *thou prepared me.*" Rivers of mere human blood could not wash away human transgression, or mines of wealth discharge the debts of the soul to God. The Son of God himself "suffered... the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

Consider next, the description given of the soul in Scripture, as *the grand object of contention between the powers of heaven and hell.*—On the one hand, our great spiritual enemy is represented as "going about seeking whom he may devour;" as employing every device, and sharpening every weapon, for the ruin of the soul: on the other, the Sacred Persons of the Trinity are described as contriving, and as carrying into full effect, the plan for the redemption of the soul. The hosts of heaven also, sympathizing in the awful struggle, are represented as surveying it from the heights of glory; as "rejoicing over one sinner that repenteth;" as following "*Him* whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and on whose head are many crowns," to the conflict with the great enemy, and as celebrating for ever the triumphs of Redemption, and the deliverance of the world.

Consider, again, what may be termed the mighty

apparatus of means and instruments which it has pleased God to put into action *for the recovery of the soul.*—The various means of grace; the sacred ordinances of religion; its blessed sacraments; the book of life; the ministers of the Gospel, with all their multiplied gifts and acquirements; the Sabbath, with all its high and holy delights; these all are but so much machinery set to work for the rescue of the soul from its temporary degradation and captivity, and for its final translation to "its own place," the world of glory and the bosom of the Lord.

And, finally, in estimating the value of the soul, consider *its capacity for the pursuits and enjoyments of another state of existence.*—The powers or worth of the reasoning faculty in a human being, would be very imperfectly ascertained by contemplating him merely in a state of infancy. What is the infant in the arms of its nurse, when compared with those philosophers who have familiarized the mind with so many of the mysteries and wonders of earth and heaven? But that infant bears a larger proportion to the earthly philosopher, than the philosopher to a spirit in glory. What an extension of capacity do all the habits and joys of the world of spirits suppose! With what faculties must that creature be endowed, who day and night, and without ceasing, sings the praises of the Lord; who sees God as he is, and knows Him as he himself is known? But the soul is capable of this extension and progress. Upon earth it fits us for earth, and in heaven will qualify us for the sublimest occupations and immeasurable happiness of the immediate throne and residence of God.

Without, then, dwelling longer upon so extensive a topic, may I not ask, If such be the powers, the dignity, the worth of the soul; such the price paid for its redemption; such the struggle for its deliverance; such the machinery set to work for its rescue; such its capacity for heavenly enjoyment; is it a matter of

wonder that the "*loss*" of the soul, taking that word even in its lowest sense, is treated of as something of the most awful and calamitous nature? Setting aside other considerations, it is evidently the loss of that with which all that is temporary and terrestrial,—even the solid earth, with all its crowded hosts of irrational inhabitants, the very frame and sphere of the material world,—cannot, for a moment, be brought into comparison. "These" all "shall perish;" but it may be said of this, as of its great Author, "Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

2. But, consider, next, *what is more distinctly implied in the term* "LOST."

In the first place, then, to "*lose*" the soul is not, as some, without the smallest warrant either from reason or Scripture, have ventured to affirm, *to be annihilated.*—Has not He with whom falsehood is impossible, spoken of "the worm which dieth not, and of the fire which is not quenched?" And how are those images of wo and anguish to be reduced to the idea of annihilation? "Hath He said, and shall he not do it?" Or how can such an hypothesis be reconciled to the statement of Scripture as to the various degrees of suffering in another world,—to the "few stripes," and to the "many?" Does annihilation admit of degrees? Or upon what principle of reasoning can the practice be defended, of treating the predicted penalties of Scripture as mere figures, and the rewards as facts and realities; regarding "eternal life" as a substance, and "everlasting punishment" as a mere image or shadow?

Again, in the next place, the loss of the soul is represented in Scripture as *a penalty inflicted by the hand of God himself.*—And how awful a character does this give to the penalty! Even now, in a world where the wrath of God is suspended; where his sword is comparatively sheathed; where "in wrath" he "remembers mercy;" where it is obviously his wish rather to deliver than to punish; where his "long-suffering" is

said to "be," or to have for its object, "*salvation*," how awful, in many instances, are these punishments! how do they "shake terribly the earth," and the stoutest heart fail for fear! What, then, will these terrors be, when the power now exerted to save is put forth only to destroy; when the "sword bathed in heaven" is "drawn from the thigh" of the "Most Mighty," and the Lord begins to light up the flame which shall never be extinguished?

Nor is this all. The loss of the soul is represented in Scripture as involving *a species of suffering altogether without alleviation*.—In our present state of being, every suffering has its mitigation. The servant of God is cheered by the conviction that the blow, be it what it may, is from a Father's hand, and is inflicted, not in anger, or in carelessness, but in love. And even the impenitent sinner is continually comforted by the sympathy of those around him; by the frequent alleviations in his lot; by the hope, in his case fallacious, that his trials will come to a speedy termination, and a brighter day succeed to this dawn of clouds. But the state of final punishment admits of no such alleviations. Even the drop of cold water to touch the tongue of the sufferer, is denied.—But why should I attempt to describe terrors and sufferings of which nothing but the experience can supply any adequate conception? Who can imagine the terrors of the Lord, when he arms himself exclusively for vengeance? Who can understand the sufferings which the *mind* in such a state will inflict upon *itself?* Conceive all the powers of the mind as active as they now are, and all employed for the torment of the sinner. We have, perhaps, witnessed the misery which the unrestrained dominion even of a single passion is able to inflict upon the sinner: conceive, then, *all* the faculties employed, and all the bad passions let loose, for the torment of the sufferer. Imagine, for instance, the discernment of truth employed only to assure the lost creature of the awful fact of his own

eternal ruin. Conceive the powers of calculation, perhaps infinitely enlarged, and altogether engaged in familiarizing the mind with ages of interminable wo. Conceive memory converted into a mere storehouse for the materials of anguish; recalling every neglected opportunity, every wasted warning, every lesson of truth forgotten, and every invitation of love refused. Imagine the conscience, which perhaps has slumbered through the whole period of our human existence, awaking from its temporary slumber, and scaring the mind with images of deeper wo and more insufferable torment.—But the contemplation, my brethren, is too terrible, and I gladly draw a veil over it, and proceed to consider,

III. The third point to which I proposed to call your attention, THE FOLLY OF THUS SACRIFICING THE SOUL TO GAIN THE WORLD.—On this subject, however, it is not necessary longer to occupy your attention, because every line in the preceding argument leads decisively to this conclusion. One observation, however, I may be allowed to make. In the preceding statement it has, for the sake of the argument, been taken for granted that it is possible to gain the world by the sacrifice of the soul. But, my brethren, how infinitely far is such a supposition from the fact! How few attain even a small part of the worldly objects at which they aim! How rarely are the hopes of the ambitious, or the covetous, or the sensual, in the smallest degree realized! How difficult is it to obtain the prizes of life! how impossible to keep them!—But, to return to the point more immediately insisted upon in the text: suppose every object accomplished, every interest secured, and honour won, and pleasure enjoyed, what can they "profit" the man rolling on the gulf we have been contemplating, and shut out for ever from hope, from heaven, and from God? Could one of the wretched spirits already consigned to the rack of punishment be brought back to this world of probation, to

give his testimony to the comparative value of a life of indulgence and an eternity of misery, what would that testimony be? Let your conscience reply: and, by all the terrors and horrors it suggests to you, let me beseech you to flee from the wrath to come, and take refuge in the love, the righteousness, the atonement, the intercession of a crucified Redeemer.

I have left myself little space to urge the practical lessons which this solemn subject presents to us; but it is difficult to avoid saying a few words, *first*, on the line of conduct which it suggests as to *ourselves;* and, *secondly*, on that which it suggests *as to others*.

1. As to *ourselves*, I cannot be wrong in affirming that the duty imperatively and emphatically taught by the text, is that of bending every faculty to the deliverance and salvation of that soul, the awful consequences of whose "loss" we have now been contemplating. And how cheering is the language we may hold on this subject! Painful, indeed, my brethren, would be the office of the minister of the Gospel, were he obliged to stop at the point we have already reached, and, having presented these terrible contemplations to the sinner, to leave him plunged in all the depths of horror and despair. But, "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which .... hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." If we are compelled, in Christian honesty and love, to unfold to you a world of wo for the impenitent, we are privileged also, if you are a real penitent—if you weep over these sins—if you fly to the cross of the Saviour of sinners, to unveil to you a world of light, and life, and joy. Listen to the Saviour of the world, and he tells you not to fear, for he has "the keys of hell and of death." Listen to him; for he invites you to enter the city of his presence, and dwell with him, and be his subjects and his children. Look, my brethren, at that world of purity, and peace, and glory.

It is "yours," if "ye are Christ's." There is a Hand strong enough to lift you over all the vast interval between perdition and salvation, if you are willing to lay hold of it. There is a Voice which says, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God!" "Come unto me, ... and ye shall find rest to your souls!" And will you not fly to the Saviour? Shall he stretch forth the golden sceptre in vain? Shall he open the gate to the heavenly city, and any refuse to go in? O may the Lord dispose many to take refuge at his Cross to-day! May multitudes of real supplicants crowd the steps of his mercy-seat! And may the walls of every mansion among us resound with the songs of gratitude and joy!

2. And does not the text suggest lessons of a similar nature as to *our duty to others?*—If, my brethren, the loss of the soul were, as some would have us believe, a mere dream; if perdition were but annihilation; if the future life were merely such a poor, passing, fugitive state as this; if it were merely on the body the future penalty was to be inflicted; then there might be some apology for indifference, for a spirit of trifling, for days and weeks passed with each other without a single strong effort to snatch a soul from perdition, and bring it to know and love God. But, if the exhibition of the subject now presented to us is the true one, then, I will not say religion only, but morality, common humanity, common honesty, demand that we live on the watch for others as well as ourselves; that we make the most strenuous efforts to arrest the multitudes who are sporting on the awful brink of eternity, and whose state evidently unfits them for the judgment-seat of God. May the Lord fill us with holy zeal and sympathy for the condition of our fellow-pilgrims in this vale of tears! God would not that any one of them should perish. The Spirit of God is said to "intercede" in his creatures "with groanings which cannot be uttered." The Son of God "ever-liveth to make intercession for them."

The crowded assemblies of the blest are bending down with holy anxiety to watch for one tear of penitence, or prayer of faith. Heaven feels the sacred sympathy through all its powers, and principalities, and dominions, and thrones. Shall not our hearts catch the same feelings; and shall we not go forth, each in his different sphere, to awaken a world that to a great extent lieth in darkness; to carry the blazing torch of vital religion into every recess of vice and of misery, and lead the reluctant soul to God, its real good, and its proper and its ultimate joy? O may such labourers abound here and every where! May one and all of us be of the happy number, who, because they have laboured to convert a sinner from the error of his way, shall, through the compassion of God, shine as stars in the firmament for ever and ever!

SERMON IX.

ON THE MARKS OF GENUINE REPENTANCE.

JER. l. 4, 5.

In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

THIS passage appears to have a primary reference to the return of the people of God from their captivity in Babylon. While the captives themselves sate mourning by the waters of Babylon, and hung their harps in despondency upon the willows, the song of Prophecy was not silent, but often proclaimed the hour of their restoration to freedom and joy. The general language of this passage, however, and especially the connexion of the name of the people of Israel, who did not return from the captivity in Babylon, with that of the people of Judah, serve to show that the text has a farther reference to those days which shall usher in the period of general conversion; to that happy period when the united tribes of Israel and Judah shall once more occupy the city of their God; and when, in common with all the scattered family of man, they shall escape from the captivity of sin, and devote themselves, with lowliness and affection, to the holy and happy service of their

God and Father. Our text, understood in this sense, exhibits so striking a picture of some of the principal emotions by which, when brought under the humbling and softening influence of the Holy Spirit, the mind of the true penitent will be affected, that I have felt it desirable to make it the subject of our special examination upon the present occasion. There is provided, my Christian brethren, but one low and narrow gate to the heavenly city,—the gate of contrition. Of what solemn importance is it, to you and to me, that we should endeavour, in dependence upon the Divine blessing, to ascertain whether we ourselves have passed its threshold, and are approaching the kingdom of our God! May the Spirit of the Lord be with us in the present endeavour to satisfy our minds as to this point!

Considering, then, the passage before us as descriptive of the penitent when returning to God in a frame of genuine lowliness and contrition, let us endeavour to notice the several points in his character, to which it directs our attention.

1. In the first place, then, it is said, "THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SHALL COME, THEY AND THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH TOGETHER."—In other words, these two people, who, though members of the same family, had so long lived in a state of the most deadly hatred and hostility—who had frowned upon each other from their opposite mountains, and refused to exchange even the commonest courtesies of life—when touched by a feeling of genuine contrition, shall "come" "together;" shall unite and amalgamate; shall forget their former subjects of contention, and approach in one body the Throne of love and compassion. And such, my brethren, is the constant effect of genuine religion. Vice, by increasing our selfishness, by sharpening the natural irritability of the temper, by filling us with a feverish anxiety about the objects

of time and sense, "separateth even chief friends." In like manner, a merely speculative and ceremonial religion rarely fails to disunite its followers. But, on the contrary, serious, heartfelt, spiritual, scriptural religion binds and consolidates. By teaching us our own guilt, it renders us more tender to the faults of other offenders. By revealing to us the love and grace of a Redeemer, it fills us with love to the creatures for whom he died. —The early Christians, constrained by this principle of attachment to their Lord, "were together, and had all things common." The Apostles, governed by this principle, never cease to inculcate upon their hearers the duties of forbearance, tenderness, and charity:— "Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted:" "Love as brethren; be pitiful; be courteous:" "Be of one mind;" "Forbearing and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." When, my Christian brethren, shall more of this spirit be felt and displayed in countries professing the religion of Christ? Never, till the temper of real contrition, with all its train of accompanying graces, enthrone itself in the mind; never, till real Christianity take the place of that which is nominal; never, till we love God better than we love ourselves; never, till we choose rather to sacrifice our interest and indulgences, than to disturb the peace of the church, and rend the seamless garment of our Redeemer.—Hasten, O Lord, the happy day, when, according to thine own declarations, "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim;" when we shall "beat our swords into plough-shares, and our spears into pruning-hooks," and we "shall not learn war any more;" when the voice of discord shall cease in the land; when the members of the same mystical body shall not come together to cavil or object, to tear to pieces the argument of their minister, or the character

of their neighbour; but when the assemblies of earth shall present a counterpart of heaven, and all shall combine to promote the glory of God and the best interests of his creatures. The mind of God has been said to be "one vast impulse to do good;" and then shall the Church reflect His sacred image when all hearts are melted into one, and that one heart is emptied of its selfishness, and filled with charity wide as the wants and the sufferings of a fallen world.

II. But, secondly, it is here said of the people of Israel and Judah, that "THEY SHALL COME WEEPING."

Nothing can be more evident, than that the God we serve desires the happiness of his creatures. Nature and Scripture have on this point but one voice; and it never ceases to proclaim the delightful truth, that "God is love." But if the Lord desire the happiness of his creatures, then dejection and tears cannot, in themselves, be pleasing to him. As, however, the tenderest parent sees with joy the tear of penitence steal over the cheek of his guilty child; as no pang is deeper than that inflicted by the discovery that a state of separation from himself costs the child of his bosom neither fear nor anguish; thus our Father, which is in heaven, expects in us, the prodigal children of his family, sorrow and anguish of soul, till our reconciliation with Himself is accomplished. Hence it is said in the Scriptures, "Blessed are they that mourn." Hence the guilty people of Judea are thus addressed: "Turn ye unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning" ..... "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar; and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach."—But how is it possible, my brethren, to reconcile with language such as this, the conception, so prevalent in the world, that the proper object of life

is amusement, and our reasonable and legitimate temper of mind thoughtlessness and a spirit of almost ceaseless dissipation? It is indeed true, that the temper of mind becoming the man who is reconciled to God by the sacrifice of his Son, who is washed by the Blood of Christ and sanctified by his Spirit, is peace, and cheerfulness, and joy:—"Rejoice in the Lord; and again I say, rejoice:" "I will go unto the altar of God, of God my exceeding joy:" "My servants shall sing for joy of heart:" "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines.... the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; *yet* will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." But peace of mind *before* reconciliation—peace, when the Lord has a "controversy" with us—peace, when, if we die to-night, we shall be in perdition to-night—this is not the peace sanctioned by Scripture, but a state of repose leading to almost inevitable destruction. The drunkard may shout with exultation even when the flame is seizing upon his mansion; the maniac may dance in his chains. The sober and reasonable, however, will not imitate, but pity their infatuation. Let me, then, call upon any in this assembly who have never as yet bowed themselves in deep sorrow and humiliation before the cross of their Redeemer, solemnly to consider the words of the text.—The true penitent is there described as "*going and weeping*." It is not, indeed, my intention to affirm that tears are the necessary, or the only sufficient, expression of grief for sin. Many a sad heart would delight to weep, but cannot. The fountains of its sorrow lie too deep thus to find vent at the surface. It is not, therefore, for tears, or indeed for any particular outward expression of grief, that we ask, but for *the grief itself.* In the name of the Lord of Hosts; in the name of his violated law; in the name of his Son, whom the impenitent "crucify afresh;" in the name of the Holy Spirit of promise, to whom they

" do despite," we ask for deep, and serious, and devout reflection; for penitential sorrow; for every inward feeling, and for every outward expression, by which grief, and shame, and contrition for sin may be duly manifested. The language of God, to persons in a state of impenitence, is, " Consider your ways:" " Commune with your own heart:" " Weep for yourselves, and for your children:" " They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."—Let no man mistake his circumstances. There is indeed " joy in the dwelling of the righteous." The voice of *their* Father has said, " Thy sins and thine iniquities will I remember no more." The Angel of the Covenant has touched the chains of their corruption; and as the heavy manacles fall off from them, they have cause even to shout for joy. But you, on the contrary, are as yet in your sins; you are as yet " led captive" by the great enemy. The terrors of the Lord hang over you. The spirits, who rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, mourn for you. Thousands, it is to be feared, who have sunk to the grave in your condition of mind, are beginning to pay, by ages of misery, for the unwept levities, and follies, and crimes of their earthly pilgrimage. Well may it, then, be said unto you, " Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

III. In the third place, these returning penitents are described as " SEEKING THE LORD THEIR GOD."

And here, my brethren, is one of the grand distinctions between true and false repentance. That sorrow of the world which " worketh death," ordinarily evaporates in a few unmeaning words or tears. The individual has perhaps heard something of the predicted penalties of sin, and he trembles as he hears. But he has no hatred of sin; no desire for the ascendancy of better feelings in his soul, for the fruition of God and an admission into his kingdom. The real penitent, on the contrary, is not merely startled by his danger;

he detests his offence. His soul longs for emancipation from its corruptions, and for a full and free entrance into the presence of the Lord: "When shall I come and appear before God!" "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God:" "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." A few bursts of passion, a few unmeaning tears, loud and vehement expressions of grief for sin, which lead the sinner no nearer to God and holiness, are far from constituting genuine repentance. To repent, is to "return," and "*to seek the Lord our God.*" "Why," asks the Lord himself, of Joshua and of the elders of Israel, when passionately but unprofitably mourning over the offences of Israel, "why liest thou on thy face? up, sanctify the people." The temper of the real penitent is that of the prodigal in the Gospel: "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants"—admit me, in any capacity, to thy friendship and family. He has caught such glimpses of the invisible world, that nothing short of it, nothing within this world's perishing circumference, can in the smallest degree satisfy his soul. Like the eagle in its cage, he longs for liberty; that, with outstretched wing, and an eye fixed on the Sun of Righteousness, he may soar away into the pure, serene, and unchanging effulgence and glory of the paradise of God.

IV. In the fourth place, it is said of the returning penitents in the text, "THEY SHALL ASK THE WAY TO ZION."

It is something in religion, my brethren, to have discovered that we are out of the way. The next mark of genuine repentance is a lively, persevering anxiety to be put into the way. But this anxiety will not discover itself in blind and random efforts to search out

the path by our unassisted powers, but in humbly and earnestly availing ourselves of every appointed channel by which safe and sure intelligence on this all-important subject may be conveyed to the soul. The penitents in the text "*ask their way.*" Distrusting a heart which has often misled them, they go for instruction to the ministers and servants of the Lord, to the appointed guides of the district; and especially to Him who loves to "go before" his sheep, and lead them to the pastures of their proper happiness.

And, observe, the place which they are said to seek is "*Zion*,"—the "city of their solemnities;" the holy city; the city in which dwelleth the Great King; where his temple arises; where, having laid aside the thunders of his just indignation, he sits between the cherubim, to dispense mercy and love to his guilty creatures.

And like these will be the inquiries of the real penitent, under whatever sky he may offer the prayer and shed the tear of contrition.—Hast thou, poor dejected wanderer, got out of the way; and, in the trackless desert of human existence, knowest thou not what path to pursue? Then, profit from the example of thy fellow-pilgrims in the text: "ask" thou "the way." Go to the Scriptures; go to the ministers of religion; go to the long-tried and experienced Christian; go to the man who has trod every spot in the wilderness of life before you; go, especially, to Him whose office it is to "guide us into all truth;" to Him who is the leader of his people; who precedes them in the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night; and thus seek out the path which leads to happiness and God.

And, remember, that it is the way to "*Zion*" we are to seek.—How many, who seem to have entered upon this inquiry, sit down in some bower of fancied peace and security, which the great enemy has decked out for their delusion! Call to mind, however, that half-way religion is no religion. To part with a few

gross crimes, or disgraceful habits; to abandon pursuits which have almost abandoned us; to exchange the follies of youth for the graver vices of the grown man; to rush from one extreme into its opposite; to be the same man in heart, while we are changed in aspect;—this is not genuine repentance. The real penitent never stops till he reaches the city of God; he counts nothing done whilst any thing remains undone: he "presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" he esteems himself safe only when the last stage of the wilderness is passed. And, however bright the sunshine, and clear the fountains, and extensive the prospects, which cheer him on the journey; and however wise, and strong, and compassionate the Guide who goes with him, and delights to succour, to defend, and to bless him, he neither puts off his armour nor rests from his labour till he sits down in eternal tranquillity in the paradise of God.

V. But, fifthly, it is said of these penitents in the text, they ask their way to Zion "WITH THEIR FACES THITHERWARD." In other words, they are really bent on discovering the city which they profess to seek. Their eye is upon its towers; and their hearts are honestly impelling them in the right line of direction. Their inquiry has no alliance with the empty curiosity of the man who has no intention of adopting the advice which he solicits, and follows one path when his guide directs him to another. But, hearing a voice behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it," they implicitly follow the leadings of Providence and the suggestions of the Spirit. But, O how unlike, my brethren, is this temper of mind also, to that of too many pretended inquirers in religion! We ask the way to heaven; but is it not too often with an eye fixed on this world? We study the map of Scripture; but is it not mainly with the intention of chalking out

a path for ourselves? We crowd around the ministers of religion; but is it with the simple desire of becoming "followers of them" as far as they are "followers of God?" Are we not often wanting, in what I may call the grand staple of the religious character—"simplicity and godly sincerity?" And is not the life, in too many instances, one great practical falsehood, from its commencement to its end? If the language of a large number of the petitions offered up from day to day to the throne of God were to be translated into the real language of the hearts of the worshippers, would not amazement and horror seize upon the standers by?—If, then, you are indeed calling upon the Spirit of the Lord to direct your steps to Zion, let it be your object, under God, to bend your "face thitherwards;" to yield to the first guidance of the Spirit; to be always found where He leads you; and, finally, to live up to the light you have, while you are seeking for more light at the hands of God. How encouraging is the promise, to an honest mind, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God!"

VI. In the last place, the individuals in the text are described as saying, "COME AND LET US JOIN OURSELVES TO THE LORD IN A PERPETUAL COVENANT THAT SHALL NOT BE FORGOTTEN."—And such is uniformly the desire of the true penitent. Bound to God, as every Jew was by circumcision; united to him, perhaps by private vows as well as public profession; one and all of them had broken these solemn engagements, and thereby cut themselves off from the benefits pledged to them in the covenant of the Lord. *Ought* their hearts to have been satisfied while in such a state of alienation from God and forfeiture of their inheritance? Touched, therefore, by the sense of their loss and their wretchedness, they are represented in the text as exclaiming, with one heart and voice, "Come

and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." 'Come and let 'us bind ourselves to him, not, as before, by the en-'gagements of a day or an hour, but by a covenant 'lasting, as the powers and mercies of the God we 'serve.' And what, my brethren, are our own circumstances? Are we not bound to the Lord by the covenant of baptism? Are we not consecrated on the altar of the Most High God? Can *we*, whatsoever others may do, speak of our independence, and insist upon the privilege of following our own way and seeking our own pleasure? Are we not the sworn enemies of sin, the world, and the devil? Are we not the enlisted soldiers of the Cross? And how have we fulfilled our engagements to God? Will any single man venture to lay his hand on his heart and say, I have fulfilled them as I ought? And, if not, what is our duty to-day? Is it not to say, as in the text, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten?" 'Let us bind ourselves to God; 'let us devote ourselves altogether to him; let us im-'plore the grace which may fix our wavering souls; 'which may fasten us to his altar; which may unite 'us to him in bonds that shall never be broken.'

And now, my brethren, I will take permission to address myself to this congregation as though chiefly made up of two classes of persons, in the most opposite state as to this covenant with God of which the text speaks.

1. And, first, let me remind the *impenitent* of the terrors of their circumstances, as respects this holy covenant with God.—Remember, thou poor deluded person, that to be careless, and worldly, and impenitent, is to be out of the covenant: and to be out of the covenant, is, for the present, to be without the pale of mercy, and cut off from the favour of God. Now, let me ask, How would men be likely to act in worldly

circumstances of a similar nature with your own? Suppose, for example, at this moment a declaration to be issued from the supreme authority of this country, that all the miserable creatures in our dungeons, whose names within a certain period should be inscribed in a certain volume, should receive a free and full pardon—what a ray of joy would dart through those dreary chambers! How would hearts unchecred for years, perhaps, by a single feeling of consolation, leap for joy; and what anxious haste, and even importunity, would be discovered to press towards the throne, and to be included in the privileged number! I ask, then, my brethren, for the same zeal, the same promptitude, the same importunity, as to your immortal souls. I beseech the unconverted and unpardoned sinner, by an earnest and devout approach to the Throne of Grace, to seek the mercies of that "better covenant," the covenant of love, and peace, and joy, into which a compassionate Saviour is ready to admit you. Draw nigh to God with genuine and heartfelt penitence, and in the name of Him who loved us and washed us in his own blood; and his language to you—and, oh, what language for a trembling and astonished heart!—shall then be, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Where, where, let me ask, is the man so infatuated that he will not hear and obey the call, and "subscribe himself" heart and soul "to the Lord?"

2. To *the man who is honest and lowly in heart* I am privileged to hold still more encouraging language. —It is possible that your own circumstances, with regard to the covenant of grace, may be sometimes a subject of distress to your minds. But what is the source of your disquietude? Do you fear lest the frequent violation of your engagements with God may have diverted him from his purposes of mercy; and lest he should have already excluded your name from

his covenant? My Christian brethren, his dispensations are not meant for angels, but for fallen and contrite men. And hear his language to the real mourner for sin: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed." The Father of mercies is faithful, even amidst the lamented infidelities of his creatures; and remembers his covenant, though we too often forget or neglect it.—Or, again, is your disquietude excited by the instability and weakness of your own character? Do you apprehend, that, even if admitted into the covenant of grace, you must soon, by inconsistency or infirmity, forfeit your privileges, and fall from the Divine favour? Once more let me send you to the word of truth: "This is the covenant that I will make with you, ... I will *put* my laws into their minds, and *write* them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." The Lord whom you serve, therefore, shall not merely be faithful to his own engagements, but pledges himself to give you stability in yours. He will write his law in the heart of the contrite, even in indelible characters. He will give you strength for your weakness; firmness for your fickleness; perseverance for your inconsistency and cowardice. And what more can the heart desire? May I not, then, urge upon you, with all the vehemence of affection, the language of the text, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten!" Come and let us break with a wicked world,—consecrate ourselves to God—seek the privileges and blessings of his covenant—and devote ourselves simply and faithfully to the discharge of the duties it prescribes. And to this end, my Christian brethren, call to mind, especially, that it is a "covenant that shall not be forgotten." It is remembered by God, and it must be remembered by you. Remember it, therefore, my brethren, in the tumult of

business and in the shades of retirement; in the study, in the field, and in the family. Let it be seen and felt, in all circumstances, that the mark of God is upon you. Consecrated to the Lord, let it be your steady object and desire to live to his glory, and to the benefit of his creatures. And, for your encouragement in this high enterprise, listen to those cheering expressions: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

SERMON X.

CHRISTIANS THE "FRIENDS" OF CHRIST.

JOHN xv. 15.

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends.

THE blessings of friendship have supplied a theme to poets and orators, in every period of time, and in almost every region of the world: and, in this instance, these sometimes questionable authorities speak the language of common sense and experience. Few will dispute the joys and privileges of this intimate union of mind with mind, but those who have never felt them. He, who by some peculiarity of constitution, or defect in temper or habits—by his hardness, or coldness, or selfishness, or vanity—is reduced to that state in which he has "none who love him, none whom he can love," is not unlikely to be the most mischievous, and is almost sure to be among the most miserable, of his species.

The alliance, however, of man to man in our present state of being, has many great defects. The birth as it were of a fallen world, it carries about with it many marks by which its low origin may be discovered. But, in this instance, as in almost every other, religion comes to our aid; and whilst it supplies new and more powerful bonds, by which man is united to man, it proposes also an union of a more perfect and intimate

nature, between God and his creatures. How simply and beautifully does the text assure us of the fact, that the Saviour of sinners delights to see his creatures shake off the bonds of slavish fear, and cultivate that union of heart which alone deserves the name of friendship! "I call you not servants; .... but I have called you friends."

It is my wish, my Christian brethren, on the present occasion, to dwell upon this idea; and, without any intention of lowering the value of human friendship, to point out the superiority of your Redeemer, as a friend, to all those with whom you may be disposed to unite yourself.—May the God of all mercy be with us in these inquiries, sanctifying those hearts, by the mighty energy of his Spirit, which he is willing to claim and to possess as his own!

I. In the first place, then, I must remind you of the LONG DURATION of that friendship with the Saviour of which I now speak.—The duration of a friendship is thought, and justly thought, to add much to its value. "Thine own friend, and thy *father's* friend," says Solomon, "forsake not." In which passage, the love which has been felt for our parents is suggested as a motive and ground for our own affection. Call to mind, then, the long duration of that love which your Redeemer has felt for you. I will not merely remind you of the temporal or spiritual blessings which have been scattered upon every step of your pilgrimage; of the love which beamed on your infancy, and has followed you through every stage of your maturer age. I must go further. "Before Abraham was," says our Lord, "I am:" and there is no moment of his existence, in which he has not deeply sympathized in all the concerns and interests of his people. He was "the Lamb *slain before the foundation of the world;*" slain, that is, in thought and intention, for his church, and ready to die at the instant in which our necessities

should demand it. And since the moment when we first entered upon the risks and trials of this fallen world, in all our afflictions he has been afflicted; and "the angel of his presence" has "saved us: in his love and in his pity he" has "redeemed us; and he bare us, and carried us all the days of old." These considerations, as to the long continuance and fidelity of the friendship of our Lord, will always have much weight with the true servant of God. When, for instance, the Psalmist is looking out for some encouragement to his own sinking spirits, he says, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old." In like manner, when St. Peter would urge his fellow Christians to seek after higher attainments in holiness, he reminds them, that they have already "tasted that the Lord is gracious." And surely, my brethren, this motive for trusting in our Heavenly Friend, may be conscientiously urged upon all those to whom I am addressing myself. It is the Friend of your youth—it is your Friend, and your father's Friend—it is the Friend of her who fed and warmed you at her bosom—it is the Friend of those ancestors who have sunk to their graves—it is the Friend of all those whose memories are embalmed by the tears of the wise, the grateful, and the good. It is this general, this ancient Friend, this Friend of many ages and of all seasons, of whom we remind you, when we pronounce, the Only Name "under heaven given.... whereby we must be saved." It is not an untried guardian and guide whom I am commending to you. He has taught you when ignorant; fed you when hungry; comforted you when miserable; pardoned you when guilty; redeemed you by his blood; watched over you by his Spirit; and has always been, what he is now, the ever-present help and comforter of his people. He it is who says to you, "I call you not servants,.... but I have called you *friends*."

II. In the second place, the Son of God is a DISINTERESTED FRIEND.—Human friendship, even under its purest form, is too often debased by an alloy of self-interested feeling; nor, indeed, is it conceivable that, surrounded as we are by wants and difficulties, the conviction that an individual is able to relieve our necessities and mitigate our sufferings, should not exercise a certain measure of influence on the mind. It is said, as to the purest affection of the human soul, "we love Him, *because* He first loved us;" and it is an over-refinement in morals, to cast a reproach upon our affection to another, because we love him not exclusively for what he *is*, but in part for what he *does*. —But the selfishness of the human heart does not stop at this point; and the lover of his species is often shocked to observe how deeply selfishness taints even our closest friendships; and that the man who is, from any cause, and however reluctantly, opposed to our interests, is rarely for a long period the object of our regard. Contrast with this imperfect alliance, the friendship of the Redeemer for his creatures. How untainted is it with selfish considerations! By what service of ours, for example, can we be said to have at first attracted his regard? "When we were yet without strength," says the Apostle, "... Christ died for the ungodly." And what are the new services we can render by which to secure and perpetuate his love? "Can a man," it is asked in the book of Job, "be profitable unto God? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" Can he need the homage of a few worms of the earth, amidst the worship of the ten thousand times ten thousand who surround his Throne, and sing from age to age the song of gratitude and love? How defective is the service we render him! how transient are our most enduring affections; how languid their intensity; how sordid their purity; how mixed is their motive; how

limited is their influence! Oh the joy of knowing that the friendship of our Lord is not dealt out with an ungenerous and exclusive regard to the merits of his poor fallen creatures! You, who feel the poverty and nothingness of your own pretensions—you, who would shudder at the obligation to produce a single undefiled thought or action as the price of your safety—remember that the friendship of your Lord is the result, not of merit in man, but of mercy in God. He loves you, if sincere, and contrite, and a supplicant for pardon and grace through the blood of our Redeemer, not in consequence of your usefulness, but in spite of your unprofitableness—not because you are deserving, but because he is compassionate. Praise him, my Christian brethren, for these unmerited mercies, and rejoice in the love which prompts him to say, "I call you not servants, ... but . . . . *friends.*"

III. In the third place, the Saviour of the world is A SINCERE AND DEVOTED FRIEND.

Human friendship is often confined within very narrow limits. The largest heart has its stinted and narrow corners; and we discern perhaps a failure in friendship, at the moment, or in the very point, where we could least have anticipated it. But how wide, and deep, is the love of the Redeemer! How tenderly does he sympathize in our sorrows! "Jesus wept." How ardently does he participate in our real joys! "Jesus rejoiced in Spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." How anxious was he to live for our benefit! "He went about doing good." How ready to suffer, to bleed, and to die for our final deliverance! "He gave himself a ransom for all." In the season of his deepest trials, he did not forget us: "I will that they be with me where I am." In the years of his triumph and glory he is equally mindful

of us; "I go" to "prepare a place for you," and "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Surely, my brethren, it is impossible to describe in too strong language the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, of an affection such as this. In the impressive language of Scripture, such "love is strong as death." I may well encourage each one of you to value it, to seek it, to cast yourself upon it. I may well speak to those who are groaning under the deficiencies and narrowness of all earthly alliances; who are searching in vain, perhaps, for affection which is wide enough for all the wants and sympathies, the cares, the wishes, and interests of a large and warm heart; and bid them listen, for the satisfaction of their souls, to the merciful and cheering language of the text, "I call you not servants, ... but .... *friends*."

IV. In the fourth place, the Saviour of the world is A SAFE AND A PROFITABLE FRIEND.—Human friendships are, alas! not always profitable in the proportion in which they are intimate, or delightful. The heart is sometimes drawn to improper objects; and even in the instances where our affection is on the whole rightly bestowed, how rare is it to find a friend so faithful to our real interest, that he will rather sacrifice our regard than neglect to promote our improvement! And yet let me remind you, my brethren, that to spare the fault of another rather than risk his displeasure, is to sacrifice him to yourself; and is therefore an evidence rather of selfishness than of friendship. Very distinct from this is the friendship of our Redeemer. His language is, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." And how inevitable does the rebuke follow the sin, and every dispensation of God manifest his anxiety to reclaim the offender! No sooner did the language of the disciples indicate a spirit of worldliness or severity, than at once our Lord

exchanged his accents of love for those of stern and lofty rebuke: "Get thee behind me, Satan:" "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Here indeed, my brethren, is one of the most important distinctions between the love of man, and the love of God to his creatures. The parent, in the extravagance of her affection, often sacrifices the soul of her child to the indulgences of its body. The friend boasts of his blindness to the faults of his friend. The lover becomes attached to the very defects and deformities of the object of his affection. Of Christ alone is it said, "He shall sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Other affections, in fact, too often debase and impair: the love of God sanctifies and improves. Other attachments, by ministering to selfishness, stunt the growth of all that is large, and liberal, and magnanimous: the love of God, on the contrary, excludes what is low, and imparts what is lofty and great—moulds us to a new form—breathes into us a new spirit—stamps us with the image of God, and enables us to live to his glory. Other affections, if powerful, direct the mind to one object, and absorb them in one interest. The love of the Christian to his Redeemer gives a new charm to every other legitimate object of affection; and, like the sun in his strength, is light in itself, and sheds a new lustre on every surrounding object.

V. In the fifth place, the Saviour of the world is A FRIEND FULL OF STRENGTH TO ACCOMPLISH EVERY RIGHT WISH OF THE SOUL.

Even with the strongest affection for our friends, we find it difficult to render them any very essential service. Either they do not want that which we are able to give, or what they want we are unable to supply. Take, for instance, the case of those for whose interest you may be supposed to feel the most deeply; I

mean, the children of your own bosom. How little, comparatively, can you do for them! You cannot stay the progress of disease; you cannot string the shrunk nerve, or give colour to the faded cheek, or perhaps even mitigate for a moment the pang which rends your own breast as much as theirs. And, even could you thus minister to the necessities of the body, what can you do for the soul? You cannot lodge the arrow of conviction in their bosom—prostrate them as sinners before God—lead them to the cross of the Saviour—fill them with gratitude for his love—"pluck them as brands out of the burning," and erect them as "pillars in the temple of our God." You "cannot bind up the broken-hearted," or "let the prisoner" to his corruptions "go free." But hear the description which is given of our Heavenly Friend: "The Lord hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives.... to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.... to comfort all that mourn.... to give unto them beauty for ashes.... the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." It is said of Him, that he is "able to succour them that are tempted," and to "save to the uttermost" all that come unto God by him; that "with power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out;" and that "he must put all enemies under his feet,"—"for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings." And surely, my brethren, such is precisely the Friend of whom such poor, weak, worthless, guilty creatures as ourselves, stand in need. Angels may want only the friend who can receive benefits: we need the Friend who can impart them. Within and without we are surrounded by difficulties. The "enemy cometh in like a flood." Thousands are falling at our right hand and at our left. Who is he that can blunt the arrow of calamity; arrest temptation in its course; give the word, and "Satan as lightning" shall "fall from heaven;" disperse every difficulty, and bear us, on the wings of faith and love,

to the lofty seats, and everlasting tranquillity, and pure joys of the kingdom, to the "rest which remaineth to the people of God?" "*Who* is this," asks the Prophet, "that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" "I," answereth the Saviour himself, "that speak in righteousness, *mighty to save.*" What individual is so blind to his wants and dangers, as not to feel the immeasurable value of such a Friend? In our natural and unassisted state we lie like the poor wretches in the porch of Bethesda: the Lord of the pool says to us, "Arise and walk;" and, blessed be God, he is ready and anxious to give the power to fulfil his own merciful injunctions.

VI. In the sixth and last place, the Saviour is AN UNCHANGEABLE FRIEND.—"Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle" of the Law of God shall not fail; and, therefore, still less the great and unchanging Author of that Law. He is that Lord who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." How mutable and transitory, my Christian brethren, are all human alliances! How much affected by time and place, by a clashing of interests, by a difference of pursuits, by the vicissitudes of life, and, alas! by the visitations of disease! Who does not look in vain for some of the cherished possessions of his earlier years; and feel, perhaps, through every fibre of his heart, the truth, that friendship, like life itself, is but "a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away?" But, thanks be to God, all is not thus fugitive and variable. If the stars shall fall from heaven, and the heavens themselves be rolled up as a scroll, the Lord who ruleth these heavens shall not decay, and the star of his love shall beam for ever: "I am the Lord, I change not." He hath made with his people "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from

thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." Delightful assurance, to creatures navigating an ocean where, from minute to minute, the wind shifts, and the sounding changes, and the stillest calm is but the prelude to the fiercest storm! The uncertainty of life, my brethren, is a topic upon which scarcely any man need preach to another. I ask not, what is fugitive, but what is enduring? The very bow in the heavens which announces to us the security of the earth from one species of destruction, shall itself be dissolved—for "the elements shall melt with fervent heat." "Nevertheless," it is your privilege, as Christians, to "look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." The moment in which all things shall be destroyed, is the moment which fixes the seal of permanence and perfection to the blessings of a Christian; and when "time shall be no longer," he shall enter upon the unchanging glories of eternity.

I have but a few additional remarks to offer, as deductions from what has now been stated.

1. In the first place, if this is the just view of religion, that the Son of God is the "FRIEND" of his people, *how much is real religion calculated to add to the joys of life!*—The circumstances of some individuals, to a considerable extent, shut them out from those objects of affection, for which a sober and limited regard might be lawfully indulged. From many objects of worldly pursuit and regard, the law of God prohibits and restrains us. What, then, is to be done? Nature does not abhor a vacuum more entirely than the heart of man abhors a state of emptiness—a state in which no affection is awakened or interested; a state of solitary existence, without feeling, or sympathy, or love. And simply to take away the love of the world, without giving it another affection, is to leave the heart thus empty. In the text, my Christian

brethren, you have the remedy for this evil. In the mutual love of Christ and his members, you have an affection, which, without shutting out or impairing any other legitimate feeling, offers you an object of regard which at once excites, employs, and satisfies all the strongest emotions of the mind. Here you may love deeply, love secretly and publicly, love permanently and intensely, without the fear of mischief, or the possibility of disappointment. Thou shalt love Him, even in the years of this earthly pilgrimage, "with *all* thine heart;" and then, "when this corruptible" shall have "put on incorruption," and thou hast passed from earth to heaven, and thy discernment of excellence and thy capacities of loving are indefinitely enlarged, thou shalt love Him as angels love,—thou shalt see his face, and dwell in his presence, and sing his glory, and participate in his triumphs, for ever and ever.

2. In the next place, let the text *supply you with a lesson on the subject of human friendship.*—It has been already stated, that the duty of loving Christ constitutes no bar to the love of our earthly friends. Stoicism, indeed, proposed to govern the passions by extirpating them. The Gospel accomplishes the same end by directing the affections to a right object, and subjecting them to new rules. The employment of the term "friend," to designate the alliance of Christ with his creatures, of itself affords a presumption that he does not condemn the alliance of man with his fellow-man; and every part of Scripture establishes the same truth. "We are members one of another:" and that is a spurious religion which labours to break the bands by which our common Father has united us. But, then, remember, that if the language and doctrine of the text lend a sanction to human friendship, they also throw much light on the nature and character of that friendship which is alone acceptable to God. The affection of Christ for his creatures, is not merely the sanction,

but the model, for earthly friendship. Earthly alliances are good, in proportion as they resemble our alliance with God. Choose, then, for your friend, the man who will neither impair nor disgrace your alliance with your Redeemer; the individual who, with every just allowance for human infirmity, has "the mind that was in Christ Jesus," and reflects in his character and temper the image of the Lord you love. And, having thus made your choice, let the testimonies of your affection be those we have been considering to-day,—disinterestedness, warmth, honesty, and endurance. Be it your desire and prayer, that the friend of this world may be the friend of eternity; and that, having toiled and suffered together in this vale of tears, you may rejoice together in the land where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

3. And, finally, let me call upon you to remember, that *the duties of friendship are reciprocal;* and that, if your Saviour has thus loved you, it is for you faithfully and ardently to love and honour him. Coldness, or indifference, or neutrality, my Christian brethren, in those who behold only the terrors of the Lord, and know Him only as the unseen avenger of his insulted law, admits at least of some explanation and palliation. But when he thus invites you to his friendship and love, is it for the destitute and the guilty to refuse the invitation, to meet his love with indifference, or with the distant and reluctant homage of a slave to a tyrant? Far, far from us be a disposition of mind so unsuited to our circumstances. As the friends of the Redeemer, strive to live worthy of your high calling. Be loyal to his honour, jealous in his cause, and affectionate to his people. Carry into his services all the fervour, and faithfulness, and constancy, of a heart captivated and "settled" by the manifestations of his love to you. "By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned," strive to "adorn his doctrine," to glorify his Great

Name, and to bring back the prodigals of his family to his bosom and home. The ark of the Lord is in your camp; the banner of the Cross waves over you. In every conflict for its safety and honour, listen for your encouragement to the promises of your ascended Lord,—"To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

SERMON XI.

THE NUMBER OF THE REDEEMED.

REV. v. 9, 10.

Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.

If an individual should visit the spot where some celebrated battle had been fought, without discovering the least interest in the events of the day, or in the fate of those who had fallen, he would probably be considered as wanting in some of the noblest properties of our nature. And if, to the ordinary topics of interest connected with such a scene, were added the fact, that on this particular field some dear friend and protector of his own had fallen, a want of sympathy would be deemed an almost incontrovertible evidence of baseness and ingratitude. How affecting, then, is the consideration, that when we are led, as by the subject referred to in the text, to the hill of Calvary, the scene of the most awful conflict between the powers of heaven and hell, and where our Redeemer suffered and died for a sinful world, insensibility in the eyes of many ceases to be a crime; and men are suffered without reproach to deny to the Son of God the tribute of feeling they would render even to the meanest of his creatures! What stronger evidence can we need, that the heart is

indeed "very far gone from original righteousness," than that the very Greatness and Goodness of the Sufferer, which in other cases are supposed to create the strongest claims on our sympathy, should in this case be regarded by numbers for whom he died, as constituting a full discharge from the debt of gratitude and love?

But, my brethren, with whatever absence of deep and tender emotion the death of the Son of God may be regarded upon earth, it appears to awaken all the most powerful emotions of the spirits in glory. In heaven, one feeling pervades all classes; and one song employs every voice,—"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." It is my intention, in the hope of awakening amongst ourselves those feelings which such an event ought in every instance to call forth, to notice the several points to which the text calls our attention.

I. In the first place, consider THE NATURE OF THE RESCUE OR DELIVERANCE TO WHICH IT REFERS.

"Thou wast slain," it is said, "and hast *redeemed* us to God." The deliverance accomplished for the world, is here described under the image of "*redemption*;" an image often applied in Scripture to the deliverance of an individual who has forfeited his liberty and his life to a successful enemy. And even a slight survey of the circumstances of mankind will show how accurately their state is described by this figure.

1. Is not the man of the world, for example, till redeemed by the blood of Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit, in the strictest sense of the word a *captive?*

What, for instance, is his condition as to his own *appetites and tempers?*—Can *he* be said to be in a state of freedom, who finds himself from hour to hour con-

strained to do what his conscience condemns, and to neglect what his conscience approves? Is it freedom to be fastened (if I may so express it) to the chariot-wheel of appetite and concupiscence, and dragged into scenes and practices which the mind condemns? What deserves to be called by the name of slavery, if such a state does not? From bodily slavery we may hope that our bodily strength will set us free; but here our natural power can do nothing. To bodily slavery there is, in death, a natural termination; but to the slavery of the soul, and its awful consequences, there is no end. In a state of bodily captivity the mind may be free; but here the mind itself is in bondage. The life-blood of independence is frozen at the very heart.

Consider, also, the extent to which the unconverted sinner is a slave to the *world*.—How powerful is the tyranny which custom and fashion exercise over him! How often do we see the loftiest spirits, subjected to this iron tyranny, crouching through every stage of their existence to laws of which they see the absurdity, and practices of which they admit the folly or the crime!

And, in like manner, how abject is the submission of the man of the world to him who is called "the father of lies," the "accuser of the brethren,"—the terrible author of temptation and sin, *the devil!*—Such persons, to adopt the strong language of Scripture, are led "captive by Satan at his will." He deals with the hearts of the unsanctified according to his pleasure. He holds them wretched prisoners here, till the hour in which they are consigned to the dungeon of unmixed and interminable misery.

Such, then, is the state of bondage to which man is reduced by the Fall. But from this the Christian is redeemed by the blood of his Lord. A possibility of escape is bought for us by the sacrifice of Christ, and a resolution and ability to avail ourselves of it conveyed to us by his Spirit. Chains, too strong to be broken

by any human power, are destroyed by His hand who is said to open, and "no man shutteth;" to shut, and "no man openeth."

2. But this is not the whole of the case to which the "redemption" in our text refers. The unconverted sinner is to be considered, not merely as living in a state of bondage to corruption, to the world, and to the devil; but as living also, till pardoned and sanctified, under the sentence of *eternal condemnation*.—He has merited, and he has incurred, the awful displeasure of his God. The decree has gone forth against him, "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" and rivers of the blood of earthly sacrifices could not wash away his guilt. But to this sentence of condemnation also, the redemption of Christ is extended: "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him:" "He bare our griefs, and carried our sorrows:" "He died that we might live:" He sought out the "spirits" in the "prison" of the flesh, and in a state of condemnation; and not only "preached deliverance," but burst the bars of the dungeon, and let the oppressed go free.

Behold, then, my brethren, the nature of the rescue and deliverance to which the text refers. Is it asked, why the value of this redemption is so rarely felt as it ought? I answer, because we have no just conception of the penalty which hangs over us. It is as true of the world of punishment as of that of glory, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have it entered into the heart of man to conceive," the terrors prepared for the unpardoned and unconverted sinner. In the present state of being, the justice of the Great Avenger is of so mixed a character, and misery has so many alleviations, that it is next to impossible for us to form any precise notion of a world of unmixed anger and punishment. Those angels, indeed, who rove from sphere to sphere through the wide empire of God, may perhaps be permitted, for the security of their own love and

obedience, to catch a glimpse of the terrible regions in which their fellow-spirits are reserved for the judgment of the great day: and perhaps it is this very view, as beheld in contrast with the scenes of their daily enjoyment, that prompts those hymns of thanksgiving in which they unceasingly celebrate the triumphs of the Redeemer.

II. But let us, secondly, consider the MEANS BY WHICH THIS REDEMPTION IS SAID IN THE TEXT TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.

It might be thought that the language before us was too explicit and unequivocal to leave any doubt on the mind of a fair examiner: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." And need I say, that the text harmonizes with the spirit and language of inspiration in almost every page of the sacred record? "Without shedding of blood," says one Apostle, "there is no remission." "We were not redeemed," says another, "with corruptible things, as silver and gold, ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Is there then to be found in the creation of God a human being, with the Bible in his hand, who is yet a disbeliever in the doctrine of the atonement? It is not for us to judge such a man—far less is it for us to deal harshly with him; to imagine that this or any error in faith dissolves the bonds of Christian charity and tenderness; and that, because he is heretical in creed, we may be violent in temper;—nevertheless I look at such an individual with wonder and awe: my heart trembles for him; and I call upon the "Lord of all power and might" to rescue him from a delusion so deep, so amazing, so destructive.—My Christian brethren, do you hear of such an error with astonishment? Let me remind you, that there is one fact still more astonishing; and it is this—that there should be found men who, receiving the doctrine of redemption by the blood of Christ, can

yet live on in a state of indifference to this crucified Redeemer. Is it not next to incredible, that we should have, as to this very doctrine, cold believers, worldly believers, trifling, dissipated, and even profligate believers? Is not the union even of such terms of speech offensive to the mind? How terrible, then, must be the combination of such a profession of faith with such an exhibition of practice! Shall we not, as individuals, pray and labour for a frame of mind better suited to our circumstances? Shall we not say, 'Lord Jesus, thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. Thine we are, by purchase and by inheritance, by obedience and by suffering, by creation and by redemption—take us, and make us thine own for ever?'

But that our minds may be still more deeply affected by the deliverance thus mercifully accomplished for sinners, let us consider,

III. The NUMBERS who, according to the statement of the text, may RECEIVE THE BENEFIT OF THIS REDEMPTION: "Thou hast redeemed us," it is said, "to God—out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

It is scarcely necessary, I presume, to intimate, that these expressions are not meant to establish the doctrine that the full benefits of Christ's redemption will be finally and necessarily extended to all mankind, or, in other words, that *all will be saved*. Such a doctrine would oppose the whole tenor of the word of God. In the Old Testament, we are expressly told that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God;" and in the New, that the "wicked shall go away into everlasting destruction." The intention of the passage evidently is, to instruct us, not that all *will* be saved, but that all *may* be saved;—that a sufficient provision is made, through the love of God and by the merits of His Son, for the deliverance of every child of man, who is willing, through the appointed

means, to avail himself of this redemption. And such is the concurrent testimony of Scripture: God "would not that any should perish:" Christ "gave himself a ransom for all:" "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

How glorious, my brethren, is the contemplation to which statements such as these conduct the mind of the believer! Few circumstances are more affecting, than the degree to which the beneficence of one man to another is cramped and limited. Over how small a portion of the wide dungeon of human existence does the dim lamp of benevolence cast its light! The bounties of God, on the contrary, rise like the sun on a benighted world, break through every obstacle, and pour their golden lustre over every spot of existence. There is no individual whose descent or "kindred" constitute a bar to his possession of the unspeakable gift. There is no "tongue" in which the expression of contrition and love will not be accepted. There is no "people" which may not become the people of God. Survey, my Christian brethren, the glorious prospect which thus opens upon you, under the light of the passage we are examining. In the day of the last triumph, there shall be assembled amongst the blest, individuals from all classes of mankind, and from every corner of creation;—children who sank to their grave before the sins of life were added to the pollution of original corruption; perhaps multitudes, who, though they never heard of Christ, yet sought out, in their dark and lonely huts, with lowliness and contrition, the Righteous Father of the universe, and humbly and devoutly poured their cares and wants into His bosom. To that assembly, also, shall come myriads of believers, and saints, and martyrs, and apostles—myriads, who have sunk to rest, without a hand to smooth their pillow, or to close their eyes. In the present state of

things, the church of the Redeemer appears to be small: but the word of the Lord is gone forth, and "shall not return" unto him "void;" and all the ends of the world shall see the salvation of God. There is coming a period, my brethren, when faith shall become as general as infidelity is now; when love shall take the place of bitterness; peace, of war; joy, of sorrow; and a world of glory, of this world of delusions. The men of all lands shall learn one common language, —the language of gratitude and love; and even upon earth the song of the Redeemer shall begin: "Thou art worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof .... for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

IV. And this leads me, fourthly, to consider THE FULNESS OF THE BLESSING WHICH SHALL BE CONFERRED UPON US BY THIS WORK OF REDEMPTION. "*Thou .... hast made us*," it is said in the text, "*unto our God, kings and priests.*"

The real Christian, my brethren, is invested with many new and extraordinary powers and privileges, even in this state of being. Even here, he, in a sense, receives "the kingdom which cannot be moved." He is ruler over many things which subdue the rest of mankind. He reigns, in a measure at least, over temper and appetite. The evils of life "work together" for his "good." The various gifts and bounties which are scattered over the face of the world, are all his, if he is Christ's. Still, in this stage of existence, his dominion is incomplete. In some cases, not only does the "flesh lust against the spirit," but obtains partial and temporary successes against it. In other cases, the animal frame is too feeble for the burdens laid upon it. In this world therefore, the Christian is to be considered as rather on the steps of the throne, than in possession of its high dignities and privileges. It is in

heaven alone that he is a "king," in the full sense of the term. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life:" "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."—Wait for a little moment, thou dejected and destitute servant of the Lord. Look out of thy prison-house, and behold where, in the deep recesses of the world of spirits, myriads of thrones are prepared for the servants of the Redeemer; and thine is among them. Wait patiently; watch, in the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving; and the Lord, whom thou lovest, shall "come again, and receive" thee to himself, that "where he is, there thou mayest be also," through all the ages of eternity. He who is "clothed with vesture dipped in blood," shall go forth with the armies of heaven, to the destruction of the great enemy of his people; "and they shall reign with him as *kings* for ever."

But it is said also in the text, *Thou hast made us "priests" unto God.*—In this case, as before, the servants of God may be said to enter, in some measure, into their privileges even upon earth. They are denominated a "holy priesthood," and are called to "offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Their prayers are heard; their offerings are accepted; their sacrifice is welcomed by "the Great High Priest of our profession," and by him conveyed, in the censer of his own merits, to heaven. In this world, however, every offering is polluted by sin, and is too frequently offered in doubt and fear, as to its acceptance with God. But heaven is described, in the very book from which the text is taken, as one vast temple, of which God and the Lamb are the light and the glory, and in which His redeemed are permitted to minister for ever: "Thou . . . . hast made us priests" unto God. How glorious, my Christian brethren, is the prospect!—of thus escaping from this

body of sin and infirmity; of standing before God; of seeing his face; of assisting to bear the vessels of heaven, to kindle the flame, to prepare the gift, to offer the sacrifice, to join in the universal and unceasing anthems of the blest; to share their labours, and increase their joys!

And now, my brethren, let me briefly notice some of the practical inferences from the foregoing statements.

1. In the first place, I may be speaking to some one of the deluded individuals to whom we have before referred, and who is even yet disposed to deny the value or the necessity of the Saviour's blood, for the deliverance of the world. Let such a person solemnly and devoutly consider the text, and must he not at least be startled by it? It is possible, my brethren, that *we*, poor human creatures, are mistaken in our theories and statements upon religion; but has the delusion ascended from earth to heaven? and are the angels of God also in error? And can any language be more precise and unequivocal than this of the text, in establishing the truth, that salvation is the purchase of a Saviour's blood; that His is the only name under heaven given, whereby we can be saved; that the only way to glory is that which God has consecrated to himself by the blood of his Son? Away, then, my brethren, with all doubt and hesitation on so solemn and vital a subject. There is but one sacrifice for the sins of the world. Plead that sacrifice for your own pardon and deliverance; and may God wash you in the Blood of Atonement, and enthrone you amidst all the privileges and glories of the redeemed!

2. Again: am I speaking to any persons in a state of *despondency as to the deliverance* of their own souls? —My brethren, look from the humbling and agitating record of your own sins to the revelation of God. If this redemption were provided only for a few—if the

Lord had confined his bounties within a small circle—if only a little company were to be received out of the large family upon earth—then there might be some ground for your doubts and apprehensions. But listen to the text, and then say, whether the offer to "every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," must not be considered as extending to yourself! Is there "a fountain opened for all uncleanness," and may you not wash in it? Well may we ask, with regard to every contrite sinner, "How shall" we "curse whom God hath not cursed?" And there is no curse for the man who in lowliness of soul shelters himself under the grace of his Redeemer.

3. Finally: I may be speaking to persons who may have been seeking, perhaps through all the stages of a difficult life, for some as yet undiscovered source of *real happiness*.—In vain have they looked for it in the paths of worldly acquisition, honour, or enjoyment. Let them now search for it, where the spirits in glory have found their joy, in the love and service of God and of the "Lamb."—Men resolve to quit a world of which they have discovered the vanity; and, having taken the resolution, they wonder they are not happy. But the heart, my Christian brethren, cannot be happy, either without an object, or without its appropriate object: and the "beauty of holiness," the perfections of the Godhead, especially as reflected in the face of Jesus Christ, form this appropriate object. Cherish, then, the love of God and of Christ in the soul; and this love shall satisfy and fill it. Other lawful objects of attachment, when combined with the supreme one, will increase your happiness; but they are not essential to it. You will be enriched by their presence, but you will not be impoverished by their loss. Every creature of God, and every gift of his Providence, is to be "received with thanksgiving;" and no man can taste their full value, but the real Christian. Still, if they are withheld, he has no disposition to murmur;

and if they are removed, he can adopt, even under calamities which are calculated to crush the heart, the language of another mourner; "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord:" "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." Delightful conviction! Who, that possesses it—who that believes this Redeemer to be his own, and that he shall be admitted to this union with God for ever, would exchange it for all the day dreams of this feverish existence!—May this conviction be yours. May you every day drink deeper of the river of the pleasures of God. May the circle of your joys widen and brighten around you. May the Lord carry you in peace through the pilgrimage of life, and at length translate you to the uninterrupted joys of his kingdom.

SERMON XII.

THE GREAT ENEMY SUBDUED.

LUKE xi. 21, 22.

When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

THE enemies of our Lord, unable any longer to dispute the fact that many wonderful works had been accomplished by his hand, adopt a new expedient to destroy their influence on the public mind. They admit the reality of the miracles, and especially that he had cast out devils from the persons of those who were possessed with them: but, having made this concession, they proceed boldly to charge upon him the horrible offence of accomplishing these wonders by collusion with the prince of the devils;—a charge which, if well founded, must evidently involve the consequence, that every act of his power was to be considered as an evidence, not of his alliance of God, but of his mysterious and terrific connexion with the powers of darkness.

Our Lord, instead of indignantly, as might have been expected, inflicting some terrible mark of his vengeance upon these impious assailants of his Divinity, suggests a question, connected with their own charge against him, and which exposes to every honest mind the

inaccuracy of that charge: "Every kingdom," he says, "divided against itself, is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house, falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub." In other words, 'The casting out a 'devil is a miracle obviously opposed to the interests 'of the kingdom of Satan. If, therefore, he, as you 'affirm, has assisted me in the accomplishment of this 'miracle, he is his own enemy; and how shall his 'kingdom stand?' And then our Lord proceeds: "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." In other words, 'The devil, like a strong man possess-'ing himself of a mansion, has long held uninterrupted 'dominion over the hearts of the unconverted. I have 'come upon him, as the stronger upon the weaker, 'and have overcome him; and his kingdom shall fall.'

The words of the text, therefore, in their original application, are plainly meant to describe the general triumphs of the Redeemer over the arts and malignity of the devil. And in examining them, I might justly draw your attention to all the various conflicts of the powers of darkness with the powers of light;—to the struggles of corruption with holiness; of worldliness with spirituality; of error with truth; of superstition with pure and undefiled religion; of heathenism with the Jewish dispensation in one age, and with the religion of the Cross in another. In all these instances the Son of God has more or less "spoiled principalities and powers," and has "made a show of them openly, triumphing over them," through the power of his Gospel, directed and wielded by the arm of the Holy Spirit.

But the whole of this subject is too wide for such an occasion as the present; and I propose rather to confine our notice to what is evidently a part, and a most important part, of it. The *triumph of the Saviour in the transformation of the heart and character of a single sinner.* And with this view it is my wish, in dependence upon the Divine blessing, to call your attention,

I. To the CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE SINNER BEFORE HE HAS ESCAPED FROM THE CONTROL OF THE DEVIL; and,

II. To his CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN BROUGHT UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE SON OF GOD.

I. In the first place, then, we are to consider the CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE SINNER BEFORE HE HAS ESCAPED FROM THE CONTROL OF THE DEVIL.

1. A just conception of these circumstances is conveyed to us in the text, by these words: "*When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.*" —Much infidelity prevails in the world, even as to the existence of that fallen and apostate spirit, so often alluded to in Scripture under the names of "Satan" and the "Devil." And many attempts are made to get rid of the obvious, but unpalatable, truths upon this subject, by substituting other titles and designations for those of Scripture, when speaking of this enemy of man. But I need scarcely remind those to whom I am speaking, that the Holy Writings will allow of no such transformation of this rebel spirit, either into a mere "principle of evil," or the "personification of such a principle." They constantly speak of him as a being; and describe him as "going about;" as "walking up and down" in the earth; as "desiring to have" us; as "coming to present himself before God;" as "leading men captive;" as "reserved in chains, under darkness unto the judgment of the great day;"—expressions, none of which can with propriety

be applied except to a being or person. Nor is the language of our Church, where it commands us to "renounce the devil and all his works," and to pray that "Satan may be beaten down under our feet," less decisive on the subject. But I will dwell no longer on a point which ought not to be a matter of dispute with any professed believer in the Gospel of Christ.

In the text, this evil spirit is compared to "*a strong man armed*"—And are not his power and malignity such as to be fitly described by such an image? Cast your eyes around, and where do you not discover some evidence of his sleepless hostility to our best interests and comforts? Where do you find a spot which is free, either from sin, or those consequences of sin which are equally the result of his hatred? And how small a proportion of the evils so inflicted are brought within our own particular view! Go from amongst ourselves, for example, to countries where a corrupt form of Christianity has usurped the throne of a pure and holy worship: go from thence to the regions wasted by the plague of Mohammedanism: go to those wretched spots where, under the varied forms of Heathenism or Idolatry, the devil is worshipped, and his altars fed with the flesh of human victims. But I may say, that not countries such as these, or even the whole *visible world*, can supply us with any adequate conception of the *power* and malignity of this fallen spirit. Could we look into the pit whose "*smoke ascendeth for ever;*" could we see *the furnace of flames*, *the* "*worm that never dies*," and the "*fire that is not quenched;*" could we hear the cries of the condemned, the unceasing blasphemies of the self-destroyed; what new conceptions would break in upon us of the extent of the evils he has inflicted on the world! In the Book of the Revelation, he is figuratively represented as, in his fall, drawing one third of the earth in his train. And the actual state of the world illustrates and confirms this statement. How awful the contemplation!

and how justly may the mind of that individual stand aghast at the scenes thus presented to us, who does not look to the hour when He, whose "eyes are as a flame of fire," whose "vesture is dipped in blood," and on whose "head are many crowns," shall go forth with the armies of heaven to the destruction of the great enemy!

2. But consider, in the next place, the nature of *the influence which this evil spirit is represented, in the text, as exercising over the man subjected to his power.* He is described as dwelling in the minds of his subjects, like a monarch in his mansion: "*When the strong man keepeth his palace.*" It is true, indeed, that the devil appears to be no longer allowed, as in the early ages of the church, to maintain forcible possession of the bodies of men; but he nevertheless, to a certain extent, possesses himself of their minds. He is described, for example, as "blinding the minds of them which believe not;" as "taking" them "captive at his will." In fact, therefore, he holds possession of the nobler and sublimer portion of our nature;—of that which may be termed the seed-bed of thought, and fancy, and memory; of the powers by which we judge, and sympathize, and invent; of the passions and affections, by which we are distinguished from the brutes, and qualified for communion with our Maker. In this "palace," or seat of distinction, he enthrones himself, and rules in all the majesty of wickedness; binding every faculty of the inner man to the bad purposes of his will, and marshalling them to acts of daily rebellion against their lawful Sovereign.

How awful, my Christian brethren, is this statement! The man without religion may boast of his freedom: he may stand possessed of rank, or authority, or power, among his fellow-men: he may wield all the powers of wit, and genius, and skill: he may reign as a king among men: but he is, in fact, the subject of an empire the most horrible, and a slave of the devil; for

"his servants ye are to whom ye obey." When he sinks to rest, it is under the shadow of the wing of this great enemy. When he rises to enter on the business of life, it is under his guidance. He is, in a word, according to the emphatical language of Christ, "of his father the devil; and the lusts of his father he will do."—May these truly awful facts assist to awaken every unconverted sinner to a deep and trembling sense of his awful circumstances! May he feel that his supposed liberty is the most intolerable bondage; and that, whilst he imagines himself to rove in all the independence of self-will, and in the licentiousness of a lofty and uncontrolled nature, he is, in fact, held by a chain, of which the first link is in the hands of the implacable enemy of his independence, of his present peace, and of his future glory.

3. Observe, next, the description given in the text of the state of *the sinner's feelings when thus living under the control of the devil.* It is said, that whilst the "*strong man*" thus "*keeps*" the palace, or heart, "*his goods are in peace.*" In other words, whilst the devil thus maintains his hold upon the mind, every thing within the man is in a state of comparative ease and self-confidence. The conscience is asleep: the heart is asleep. There can be no conflict, where on one side there is no resistance. The man has abandoned himself to the grasp of his enemy; and that enemy will not provoke him to resistance, by drawing his fetters closer than is necessary. How often may individuals be discovered in this frame of mind! sporting on the very brink of perdition! hoping, in direct opposition to every declaration of Scripture; saying to themselves, We are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;" and not knowing that they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."—Can this be the state of any individual to whom I am speaking? Your mind is at ease; you live without anxiety; you could die

without alarm. But let me remind you, that as, in the body, there is an ease which belongs to health, and an ease which indicates the approach of the last stages of disease; so, in the soul, there is a real and a delusive peace—a quietness which is the gift of God, and an apathy which is the work of the devil. There are those who cry, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace!" And should we sink into the snare, how awful the delusion—how destructive this false repose in a world such as this; a world of change and of dissolution; a world where the very ground on which we stand seems almost to shake under us; and in which all the resources of wealth and of skill cannot command an hour in which to make our peace with God, and escape from the storm of his displeasure!

II. But let us now proceed, in the *second* place, to the consideration of a far more cheering and delightful topic, THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE SAME INDIVIDUAL, WHEN RELEASED FROM THE POWER OF THE DEVIL, AND BROUGHT UNDER THE POWER OF THE REDEEMER. They are thus described in the text; "*When a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh away all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.*"

1. Let me call upon you to notice, in the first place, the description which is here given of the Saviour of the world, as "*stronger*" than that strong man who before kept the heart. Be the strength of our adversary, my Christian brethren, what it may, the strength of our Lord is greater. Consider the resistless force of the Son of God, when brought to bear on the powers of darkness. When, in the days of his advent in the flesh, he unsheathed his sword, error and crime fled before it. That which eloquence and reasoning had in vain attempted to accomplish, as to the overthrow of gross and abominable crimes and superstitions, was accomplished in a moment. The bloody and lascivous rites

were abolished: the devils were cast out of the persons of men: the lying oracles were silenced. In a few short years Christianity forced its way, without any assistance from human powers, to the throne of the Cæsars; and twelve poor fishermen and taxgatherers subdued the conquerors of the world. But I would not appeal to those examples alone which are supplied by one age or country. Every day produces a species of triumph sufficiently decisive of the power of the Spirit of God over this great enemy. Let the man who has lived the longest in the grasp of this wicked one be brought in lowliness of soul to the cross of his Redeemer, and seek for deliverance from the odious dominion to which he has so long been subjected—and his rescue never fails to be accomplished. The fetters of lust and passion, which the hand of his enemy has bound on him, are burst; tempers too stubborn to be subdued by all the maxims of philosophy, or the powers of the unassisted heart, give way; the emancipated man presents himself in the majesty and independence of a new creation, and walks abroad in all the glorious liberty of the children of God. Millions of saints, and apostles, and martyrs, have cast themselves on the power and grace of the Redeemer; and have "overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

2. But observe, secondly, *the nature of the victory which is thus obtained by the Son of God.*—It is said in the text, that "*when the stronger man comes, he taketh away all the armour of the strong man, wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.*" Consider for a moment the force of these expressions.

"*He taketh away,*" it is said, "*the armour of the strong man.*" There is much, my Christian brethren, in the heart of the unconverted sinner, to which the devil trusts as to the armour and weapons of his deadly warfare upon our hopes and happiness. There are

appetites which he can excite; lusts which he can kindle; perverseness and pride of intellect which he can seduce, either into the rejection of the Gospel, or into measures of deadly hostility against it. But when Christ possesses himself of the soul, "he takes from him all his armour wherein he trusted;" subdues these lusts and passions; bends every perversity of the soul to his own purpose; gives to every faculty and passion a new and holy direction; and employs for God every power before dedicated to the devil. How glorious the transformation! "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh;" —I will take from you the heart which cannot feel for God, or sympathize in the trials of his suffering and guilty creatures, and give you a heart full of all those feelings and sympathies which are calculated to glorify God, and to mitigate the troubles of human nature. Examine the individual thus brought under the influence of the Gospel; and you shall find, not indeed a man of new faculties and passions, but a man with all those powers and energies governed by a new law, and consecrated to a new object; promoting the faith which perhaps he once delighted to persecute; and glorifying the Great Being against whom he had lived in a state of persevering rebellion.

It is added, of this "Stronger Man," that he "*divideth* the spoil."—In this expression, there is perhaps a reference to our Lord, not simply as a conqueror, taking possession of the spoils of the vanquished enemy, but distributing those spoils among the army which has fought under his banner. The spoils of the spiritual conflict, my Christian brethren, are His; but He condescends to admit all who have shared in the struggle to participate with him in the glory, and to divide with him the fruits of the triumph.—The imagery here is very striking. It may have happened, perhaps, to some of yourselves, to enter a temple hung with the banners which have been won from the enemies of our

country, and to have felt your heart kindle with gratitude and delight as you gazed on the trophied walls. Such a temple is the world. Every conquered lust, or temper, or passion, may be considered as a trophy gained from the powers of darkness, and suspended on high, as an encouragement to continue the conflict, and remain faithful to the banner of your Lord. And in contemplating these fruits of our prayers or labours, whether as public ministers or as private Christians, we may be said to "divide the spoils" with the great Captain of our salvation. When *he* "sees of the travail of his soul," he is "satisfied." And "what is *our* hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing; are not even" the ignorant who are taught, the profligate who are reclaimed, and the miserable who are comforted? "I have no greater joy," said the aged St. John, when on the very verge of heaven, "than to hear that my children walk in truth." Shall we not, then, go forth afresh to the battle; and strive, under the power of the Lord, to surround ourselves with fresh spoils,—with fresh evidences of the power of faith, and of the presence and might of our Redeemer? And when, at every step we take, a voice may be heard, "Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city;" shall we not obey the call, and go forward without hesitation or reserve, anticipating the fulfilment of the Divine predictions, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee: be strong and of a good courage?"

But here, my brethren, I must bring these observations to a close; begging permission, however, to enforce upon my hearers the two main practical truths which they seem calculated to teach.

1. The first lesson is evidently this; That it behoves every man, whatever be his station in the world, or in the church of the Redeemer, *to remember how per*

petually he is beset by that ever-watchful and malignant enemy, whose influence we have been contemplating to-day.—Am I speaking to any individuals who entertain a doubt as to the existence or influence of the evil spirit? I solemnly call upon them to weigh, with simplicity and seriousness, the scriptural testimony on the subject, of which a very small part only has been presented to them to-day. I would, moreover, ask of such persons, whether, if there be an enemy such as I have described, one of his first objects is not likely to be that of blinding the eyes of those whom he means to destroy, to the fact of his own existence? and, therefore, whether our very scepticism may not be the fruit of this terrible influence? And if so, can any circumstances of a more awful nature be conceived? Truly may it be said of such a man, "he feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside." The enemy are at the gates; and the poor deluded victim is plunged in slumbers which perhaps shall be disturbed only by the thunder of the Great Day.

I would not, however, call merely upon the sceptical, but upon those who have no such doubts as to the existence of this great adversary—upon the professed servants of Christ—to lay the same truth seriously and devoutly to heart. You also must be reminded, that the enemy of the world at large is your own enemy; that no progress in principle or practice, no heights in religious attainment, can, on this side the grave, place you beyond the reach of his assaults. You also carry about with you lusts, tempers, and passions, which supply an avenue of attack upon the soul. He may assail you in the spirit and after the very mode in which he assailed our Lord himself. He may tempt the young to self-indulgence; the more mature, to independence of God, or spiritual pride; the old, to worldliness and love of gain. He may throw out baits to indolence, to vanity, to self-love. He may strive to bring you back to the world, or to introduce its spirit

into your religious profession. He may tempt you to become followers of a party, instead of adherents to the Cross. He may teach you to confound zeal with self-will, honesty with intolerance, and a deference to some human authority for submission to God. So that, if it be true, on the one hand, that you are to "watch, for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh;" you are to watch also, because you know not the moment, or the point, at which your foe will invade the soul. Heaven, my Christian brethren, is the only place to which temptation cannot follow you; and, therefore, the only place where unceasing and laborious vigilance is not essential to our well being.

2. But, my Christian brethren, whilst I would labour on the one hand, to awaken by our text the spirit of watchfulness in the hearts of those who hear me, I feel equally desirous of impressing upon all the *second* lesson which the text no less emphatically teaches—namely, *the all-sufficiency of the Son of God to repel the assaults of the great enemy.*—There is something to me most encouraging in the fearlessness and openness with which the presence and power of such an enemy is adverted to in the sacred Scriptures. The mere pretender to medical skill is afraid to announce to the patient the extent or malignity of a disease, because he is unacquainted with the appropriate remedy. But the man of real skill boldly proclaims the nature and perils of the disorder, because the remedy is in his hands. It is thus in the case before us. A false religion, because unable to suggest the means of repelling assaults of such an enemy, might fear to announce his existence and describe his operations; but the Gospel labours under no such cause of alarm. Whilst it announces the disease, it also announces the Physician: whilst it speaks of the "strong man," it also proclaims to you "a stronger" than he, who is able to take away his armour and "divide his spoils." What can the heart

need more for its support? "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Is not the Captain of your salvation he who shall "cast" this worst enemy into the "bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more?" Let this conviction "stablish, strengthen, and settle" your minds. There comes a period, says our Lord himself, when "there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars .... men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." But he adds; "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your head, for your redemption draweth nigh." God grant that, in that awful moment, every member of this assembly may look up and see on the face of the Redeemer the smile of acquittal and of love, and hear the transporting command, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" The time is short, brethren. The world is resolving into its original nothingness. Seeing that we "look for," and may hope to enjoy, a "new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," let us "be diligent, that we may be found of God, in peace, without spot and blameless."

SERMON XIII.

THE OFFERS OF MERCY GENERAL.

LUKE vii. 39.

Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

The minister of the Gospel in some instances finds himself surrounded by those who love his Master, and are endeavouring simply and faithfully to fulfil the will of God. In this case it is his privilege to open the Scripture; to deliver to them the message of mercy and joy with which he is charged; to tell them of the present distinctions and future triumphs of the righteous, and bid them feed on the manna and drink of the stream which the bounty of their Lord has provided for them.

But the minister of religion often finds himself in circumstances the most opposite to these. He enters the walks of ordinary life, and sees around him multitudes deep in guilt and misery; lost, perhaps, to all sense of religion, and flying from the only Being who could give them purity and joy. In *this* case, what does he do?—close the volume of truth and love? turn away from these poor outcasts; consider the evils of their character as incorrigible, and their fate as determined for ever? On the contrary, he still opens the sacred volume; speaks to them of a God of mercy;

shows them the Saviour on his cross; tells them, there is compassion even for the worst; and that if, *with real contrition of soul*, they will seek salvation by grace, and through faith in the blood of a Saviour, the gates of heaven will expand even to them; that God will set a crown of pure gold upon their heads; and they shall sit down upon the throne of their Redeemer for ever.

Now, to some individuals, this latter proceeding of the teachers of religion is offensive and alarming. They think, and think justly, that a scheme of religion coming from the holiest of all Beings, must be favourable to the purity of those for whom it is meant; and, this being the case, they ask, Whether invitations thus free and large, addressed to the profligate offender, to the man who has grown hoary in sin, to the man who appears to have offended against light and conscience, can be considered as friendly to the great interests of morals and virtue? And these questions, whether we consider the feelings in which they often originate, or the class of individuals by whom they are in many instances suggested, appear to deserve the most respectful and serious consideration. May the blessing of God rest upon my humble endeavour to-day,

I. To consider THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE UPON THE SUBJECT now brought before you; and,

II. To notice SOME OF THE OBJECTIONS MOST COMMONLY ALLEGED AGAINST THAT DOCTRINE.

I. In the first place, we are to consider what is THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE, as to the offering of salvation thus largely and without reserve to the contrite offender.

1. Look, first, then, at the record of Scripture as to *the office and ministry of Christ himself*.—When, in the very dawn of the Christian dispensation, the angel announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds, his lan-

guage was, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, *which shall be to all people;* for unto you is born this day . . . a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The tidings are addressed, not merely to the moral, but to *all people.*—When St. John the Baptist saw the Son of God draw nigh to him, he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away"—what? the sins of the moral only? no—"*the sins of the world.*"—When our Lord himself undertakes to describe, by a single expression, his own glorious office, he says, "The Son of man came to seek and to save"—whom?—the righteous? no—"*that which was lost.*"—St. Peter, speaking upon the same topic, says, "He suffered . . . . the Just, for *the unjust*, that he might bring us to God."—The language of St. Paul is no less decisive: "Christ gave himself a ransom for *all*." "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive."—And St. John, the zealous advocate for all that is lovely and attractive in the Christian temper and character, speaks to the same effect: "If *any man* sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of *the whole world.*" The same Apostle also directs us to the "Blood . . . . which cleanseth us from *all* sin;" and transmits to us the astonishing invitation sent down from heaven to earth, "*Whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely."—Such is the description given in Scripture of the office of Christ.

Look next at the *ministry and conduct of our Lord when upon earth.* Open the book of God, and how often do you find the Saviour in the abodes of guilt, in the company of the sinner; searching out transgression in its worst haunts; pouring the stream of life into the most polluted spots; inviting all, be the colour or form of their transgressions what it will, if "only weary and heavy laden," if burdened with sin and longing to escape from it, to "come" unto him, that they may

"find rest to their souls."—But, without dwelling upon the testimony of the friends and followers of the Son of God as to this particular, much light will be thrown upon the real character of his ministry by considering the testimony of his enemies. Listen, for instance, to the language of Simon in the text;—or to that of the individual who forced from our Lord the declaration, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick .... I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;"—or to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." It was plainly the peculiarity, and, in the eyes of his self-righteous and hard-hearted observers, the crime, of our Lord, that he turned from haunts and employments better suited to their own views and tastes, to the deep recesses of guilt and misery; and, there erecting his mercy-seat, stretched forth the golden sceptre of compassion, and invited even the most abject, if really contrite, to a participation in the splendours and joys of his Father's kingdom. That which was said of the most illustrious of the Romans, that, "whilst others chose the side of the conquerors, he chose that of the vanquished," is, in a far higher sense of the words, true of the Lord of life and glory: he was the "Father of the fatherless, the Judge of the widow," the Saviour of the guilty, the Friend of the lost. As, in quitting the throne of his Father to descend upon earth, he perhaps sought out the only world, amidst those innumerable orbs that crowd the face of heaven, which was in a state of rebellion and of misery—the only prodigal, as it were, in the universal family of God;—so, in his residence upon earth, it was plainly his peculiar object to propose terms of peace and reconciliation to the guilty; to snatch the sinner from the depths of perdition, and establish him in the kingdom of God.

2. I would, secondly, under this head, direct your attention to *the doctrines and character of the Apostles of Christ*.—And, need I say, that they are the most

exact transcript of those of their Master? Hear the Apostles speak; and how strictly does their language harmonize with that of Christ! "To him," says St. Paul, "that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." How bold are their reproofs of self-righteousness; how honest their exposure of the insufficiency of mere morals to save the soul; how urgent their invitations, even to the greatest offenders; how powerful their exhibitions of the cross of Christ, as the only and all-sufficient instrument of deliverance to a lost world. Such indeed was the exact correspondence of their proceedings with those of their Lord, as to provoke the very same objections in the minds of their hearers? "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" "Is there unrighteousness with God? Why doth he yet find fault?" The difficulty, in fact, connected with the Gospel scheme, appears in all ages to have been next to insuperable to those who, "going about to establish their own righteousness"—or conceiving themselves, in part at least, their own redeemers—would not "submit themselves unto the righteousness of God;" or, in other words, bow down their proud spirit to the conviction that they, however inferior in the enormity of their transgressions, were alike with other men lost creatures, and must cast themselves, as unreservedly even as the worst, on the free bounty of God for deliverance. "By grace ye are saved," is the inscription on the banner of the Cross; and he who for "grace" would write "merit" upon that banner, can have neither part nor lot in the privileges and joys which it is the pleasure of the God of all grace to bestow. The Father of this fallen world calls to every one of his children, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat: yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." But if these long rebellious children, in the plenitude of their pride, re-

solve to seek as a right what he proffers as a gift; if they would claim as wages, what he is resolved to bestow as bounty; if they would extort, as the reward of merit, what was bought by the precious blood of the Redeemer, and is distributed by the large and liberal hand of parental kindness; that tender Father erects himself into the inexorable Judge; no longer proffers the gift, but dismisses the self-confident offender into the awful depths of the pit whose "smoke ascendeth for ever and ever."

II. But let us proceed, secondly, to NOTICE SOME OF THE OBJECTIONS which are commonly alleged against these large and unreserved offers to the contrite offender.

Is it sometimes asked, for instance, "Whether such free and general offers of salvation are consistent with the doctrines taught in Scripture, that God designed the salvation only of a part of mankind?"—To this question I simply and confidently answer, that I find no such doctrines in Scripture. I find, on the contrary, language such as this: God is "not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance:" "Why *will* ye die, O house of Israel?.... I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." Human teachers have indeed narrowed the circle of the redeemed, and have fancied barriers within which the offers of salvation must not be carried; but the spirit of Scripture is as wide as the wants of a bleeding world: "He gave himself a ransom for all:" "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Again: it is asked, "Is there not a philosophical difficulty in conceiving that God would offer salvation to any who will not accept it?"—To this I answer: Our business is not with philosophy so called, but with Scripture—not with what *we* think and suppose, but with what God says. To set up a spurious philosophy

against Scripture, is to oppose the mind of man to the mind of God; to raise the withered hand, which the Great Physician has cured, against the authority of Him by whom the cure is accomplished. It is justly said by Lord Bacon, that the undue mixture of philosophy and religion "makes an heretical religion, and a fabulous philosophy." And it is still more conclusively stated by the Apostle, "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.... The foolishness" (the supposed foolishness) "of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

But again: it is asked, "Do you not, by offering salvation as unreservedly to one class as to another, confound the gradations of crime, and in effect say, There is no difference between the moral man and the gross offender?"—Far from it: I believe there is no gradation of crime which is not nicely marked by the Great Judge of the world. I read of some debtors who owe "fifty pence," and some who owe "five hundred pence." I hear of some who shall be beaten with a "few stripes," and some who shall be beaten with "many." But as the astronomer, in treating of those innumerable stars which cover the face of the heavens, though their comparative distance may be very different, yet, on account of the immeasurable distance of all, treats of all as moving in the same sphere, and as being at the same distance; so is it in the case of sinners of various orders and dimensions. They are doubtless guilty in different degrees. One may be a sinner of the first, and the other of the eleventh, hour; one may have sinned against conviction, and another not; one may have wasted the opportunities of Christian instruction, and another not; one may have yielded to a pressure of temptation to which another has not been exposed: and doubtless all these facts are known, and are registered in the book of God. Nevertheless, the best of the impenitent and unbelieving—the most pure of those who have not sought to be

washed by the blood of Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit—are, in their present circumstances, so far from God; so largely in debt, without the smallest power to discharge the debt; so deep in guilt, and deep in ruin, till absolved of that guilt; that Scripture treats of all as belonging, in one sense, to the same class, exposed to the same penalty, and needing the same absolute and unconditional bounty to bring them within the circle of safety. "Except ye repent, ye shall *all* likewise perish:" "We have *all* sinned, and come short of the glory of God:" "Judgment came upon *all* men to condemnation." The ministers of Christ, my brethren, if faithful to their high office, are far from confounding the gradations of crime: they neither speak of all sins as equally sinful, nor venture to pronounce on the comparative guilt of the guilty. But they feel themselves constrained, in the language of Scripture, to say to one and all, "He that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life:" "He that believeth not," be he who he may, to whom the Gospel is proposed, "is condemned already."

But again: it is sometimes asked, "Does not the offering salvation thus unreservedly to all, lead men to the conclusion, that it matters not in what manner the morning of life is spent, since in its evening, or when they will, they may without difficulty turn to God?"—But, my brethren, where does the Scripture say, and especially to the man hardening himself in impenitence, that the return to God is *without difficulty?* On the contrary, does it not teach us that the gate of contrition is narrow, the path strait? that we must "watch and pray?" that we must "strive," and must "give diligence?" must "work out our salvation with fear and trembling?" must "deny ourselves," "take up our cross," and "crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts?" Does it not teach us, that, without the intercession of Christ and the influence of the Spirit,

repentance is not only difficult, but impossible, even to the best? And does it not, far from treating a habit of sin as of little moment, put to the habitual offender the appalling question, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." And, moreover, if the book of God supplies us with one example of a death-bed repentance, does it supply us with more than one? Is there, in fact, in the whole range of Scripture, a line or a letter which is calculated to lessen the hazard of delay; or to teach us that the march of events, or the visitations of wrath, shall be suspended, that the hesitating and doubtful may have time to awake from their doubts, and do that to-morrow which ought to be done to day?

Again: it is sometimes asked, "Whether we do not find experimentally, that by these unreserved offers of mercy, and the doctrines with which they are essentially interwoven,—the doctrines of salvation by grace, through faith in the atonement and intercession of a Redeemer,—are sadly liable to abuse? that ungodly men are apt to conclude, that, because all *may* be saved, all *will* be saved; and so to remit their exertions, and live and die in a state of impenitence?"—To these questions I answer, as before God, and in the depth of Christian sincerity, No. Doubtless there are instances of such abuse of the truth; of error thus deep and destructive. There are cases of individuals who turn the grace of God into licentiousness, and who, it is to be feared, in the awful language of Scripture, are given up to "delusion, that they should believe a lie." But such abuse of a doctrine is no evidence against it. The purest water is sullied by the foulness of the vessel into which it is poured; and there is no truth proof against the pollution of human nature. At the same time, my brethren, I am bound to add, that, if there are a few scattered instances in which these truths are thus awfully perverted, there

are instances without number in which these very doctrines become health to the diseased in soul, peace to the miserable, purity to the polluted;—in which, under the mighty and mysterious influences of the Holy Spirit, they seize upon the man, and stamp him with a new nature; fill him with the abhorrence of sin, with the love of his Redeemer, and with all the loveliness, and meekness, and holiness, of the Master he serves and loves. If it has fallen to my own lot to see a few hardened individuals, who have borrowed the aid of the Gospel to shelter themselves in their corruptions; it has been my privilege and joy to see others, whom the Gospel has rescued as it were from the waste of existence, and surrounded with all the verdure and fragrance of benevolence and purity. The search of men was for a long period directed to the discovery of some process by which other metals were to be transmuted into gold. That transmuting power in morals, if I may be permitted to borrow the allusion, is the love of our Redeemer. Let the love of Christ be really lodged in the soul; and, as surely as by a chemical processs, of which the laws are most definite and certain, the baser passions are checked, the temper subdued, the lusts extinguished, self-love cast out, the higher and nobler affections cherished and multiplied; till the whole man is gradually restored to the character of the original man—or, rather, to that image of God which was forfeited at the Fall, and which we hope to wear through all the ages of eternity. Vice, my brethren, has many sources: real virtue, I confidently believe, but one,—the love of God and of our Redeemer.

Such are the observations which it was proposed to make on the doctrine of Scripture as to the subject before us, and on the objections commonly urged against that doctrine. It is my wish, in conclusion, briefly to notice a few of the practical inferences which appear to arise out of these observations.

1. In the first place, then, it is impossible not to observe, *that if the offers of religion to the contrite are thus wide and compassionate, the gratitude and affection which they excite in us towards God ought to be proportionably sincere and profound.*—Justly might the Lord, in the enjoyment of his own immeasurable perfections, and amidst the delighted homage of the ten thousand times ten thousand happy spirits who surround the throne, have left creatures so insignificant as ourselves to the consequences of our own infirmity. With equal justice might he have visited our guilt and apostacy with the heaviest curses. But "as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." The gate of mercy is still open to us, the privileges of a Father's house are still accessible. And the man an apparent outcast from the family of God may, if a sincere penitent and believer, become a subject of joy and triumph to the crowded ranks of the blest. "What" then "shall" we "render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards" us? Surely we ought to say, We "will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord." Our life shall be one continued act of devotion to His glory. Nothing shall be withheld from Him, who has thus redeemed by his blood the creatures whom he formed by his hand.

2. But, secondly, what an encouragement does the text supply for *increased diligence in labouring for our own souls, or those of others!*—When the spark of bodily life is extinct, the standers-by can only lament over the loss of that which it is impossible to restore. But when the mental spark seems to be altogether extinguished, and the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, there is no such ground for despondency: "Thy dead men shall live." The breath of the Lord can kindle the flame, and give to the fallen man all the energies of a new and sanctified nature. Why, then, should we fear, whatever be the actual state of ourselves or of those around us? May we not say to the desponding, in the

words addressed to Joshua, "Get thee up: wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" Is thy guilt heinous?—it may be pardoned. Are thy corruptions deep-seated?—they may be dislodged. Art thou far from God?—thou mayest be "brought near" by the blood of his Son: the gulf, which now separates thee from the brightness of his presence and the joys of his people, may be crossed; the Day-spring from on high may beam upon thy desolate heart; and thou mayest find that rest and tranquillity to which thy soul has hitherto been a stranger. "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

3. Finally, what a motive *does the doctrine of the text convey to us for pity and forbearance towards the weak and guilty family of God upon earth!*—"Brethren," says one who had deeply felt the depth of the Divine compassion to his own soul, "if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness..... Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." And how can creatures hesitate to comply with these commands, who have taken a just survey of the system of compassion under which they live? Can the successful supplicants for mercy be inexorable? Can those rescued from the wreck of perdition, deny to others the bounty they have themselves experienced? Should not earth reflect the compassion of heaven, and the image of a God of love shine out in the temper and spirit of his people? Oh for a world in which the Divine bounty gave birth in the soul to all its proper fruits and consequences! In those days in which it shall be estimated at its true value, we are told that "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim;" that the disorders of the church shall be healed, and the harmony of heaven shall succeed to the discords of this contentious world. May those, who have in vain es-

sayed every other means of pacifying the broils of nations, or soothing the irritations of families and individuals, cast also this trouble at the feet of the Redeemer, and ask from God the remedy which the skill and power of man is not able to bestow! May a spirit of forbearance be diffused more largely amongst us! May every professor of the religion of the Cross carry about with him, as it were, an atmosphere of love! Into whatsoever house he enters, may he say, "Peace be to this house;" and may every heart feel the influence of the benediction! We live, my brethren, in the midst of an irritable and jarring world. It is our bounden duty to labour, in the name and in the power of the God of love, to show that we are *His* servants who "maketh men to be of one mind in an house."

SERMON XIV.

THE FATHER OF A FAMILY.

GEN. xviii. 19.

I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

When Abraham was sitting in the door of his tent, in the heat of the day, three angels appeared to him in human form. At once, with the simplicity of those ancient days, he arises, and entreats them to rest awhile, and bathe their feet, and partake of the hospitality of his tent. After the meal is finished, they ask for Sarah; and, having conveyed to her the promises of the Lord with regard to herself and her family, they proceed to the fulfilment of the office with which they were charged: "they turned their faces from thence, and went towards Sodom."

It was at this time that the Lord, about to empty the vials of his wrath upon the devoted Cities of the Plain, resolves to unfold his intention to his favoured servant. "And the Lord said, Shall I *hide* from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" Then comes the text, in which the motive is assigned why it pleased the Lord to make this remarkable revelation

to him: Shall I hide these things from Abraham? ... "for I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."

This testimony to the patriarch Abraham, considered as the head and father of a family, I propose, in dependence on the Divine blessing, to examine to-day. And in so doing, I shall consider,

I. To WHOM, as the head of a family, HIS INSTRUCTIONS WERE DIRECTED.

II. What was THE NATURE OF THESE INSTRUCTIONS; and,

III. The BLESSING PRONOUNCED upon them.

I. I am to consider to WHOM, AS THE HEAD AND FATHER OF A FAMILY, THE INSTRUCTIONS OF ABRAHAM WERE ADDRESSED.—It is said, "he will command his *children* and his *household* after him."

1. In the first place, then, his attentions were directed to his "*children*."—How widely different are the points in the character and conduct of individuals, which engage the attention of God and that of his poor erring creatures! If the worldly historian wishes to exalt any particular individual, he searches for some quality or action of public notoriety and splendour, and blazons it in the pages of his narration. In like manner, the artist seizes the object of his art in some moment of distinction and triumph, and displays him to us in the act of slaughtering an enemy, or subduing an empire. But what is the quality and practice which it pleases the Lord to record and celebrate in the conduct of his servant? "I know him," that he will be a tender and watchful *parent;* an anxious and devout guardian of that family which I have committed unto him. And the whole volume of Scripture breathes the same spirit. The tenderness of parental feeling is often chosen to

describe the disposition of God himself towards the children of men; and no language is thought too strong to condemn the absence of such a feeling, or the neglect of the duties which are associated with it. Listen, for instance, to the awful threats denounced against Eli, for a want of vigorous resistance to the profligacy of his children: "I will judge his house, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Listen, also, to the expressive language in which these family duties are enforced upon every professed servant of God: "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children; and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."—The picture presented to us in the text teaches the same lesson with the more direct precepts on the subject. Behold the patriarch. To what employment does he retire from his public duties?—to the instruction of the family with which a Gracious Providence had surrounded him. *There* it is, that, with assiduous affection, he urges on the great work of their edification, and growth in grace and love. Regarding the division of society into families, and the instinctive love of parent and child as provisions mercifully designed to secure for the young the guardianship of the more mature and enlightened, he enters upon this interesting duty; and strives to fence off, as it were, from the waste of human existence, that portion of the vineyard of the Lord which is assigned to him. —And, my Christian brethren, if there is a spectacle more terrible than another, to a mind taking its conceptions of right and wrong, of good and evil, from the only infallible standard, the book of God, it is that of a parent forgetful of these high duties, and, by his negligence or corrupt example, hanging the mill-stone of impenitence round the neck of his child, and so plunging it in the depths of perdition. We could not persuade ourselves, after the example of the poor hea-

then, to cast the fruit of our loins to the monster of the forest, or to the bird of the air; to abandon him to starvation or nakedness, while we had bread to eat or raiment to put on: "but, alas! are not many starving the souls of their children—robbing them of the robe of a Saviour's righteousness—and, at the best, so trifling with their eternal interests that they may justly expect the offspring of their bosom to arise in the presence of the Great Judge, and curse the authors of their existence, as the instruments of their eternal ruin.

2. But, secondly, under this head, it is said of Abraham, that he would command his "*household*" also to "keep the way of the Lord."—Love to our children, if this love does not extend itself from them to all others with whom God has brought us into connexion, it is to be feared is little better than a species of enlarged selfishness. Among the most interesting and important of these alliances, is that of the master with the servant. If servitude be considered merely as an arrangement of society, which binds one man slavishly to do the will of another at a certain fixed stipend; far from finding any thing in such an arrangement which interests and gratifies the mind, there is much to revolt and offend it. But if servitude be regarded as that arrangement of society by which, as the servant is bound to promote the bodily ease and comfort of the master, so the master is bound to promote the spiritual welfare of the servant; no appointment can be better calculated to improve the condition of mankind, and to promote the glory of God. In this case it becomes a scheme by which the extreme classes of society are brought together upon terms of reciprocal comfort and advantage; by which a man pays, with the strength of his body, for the benefit of his soul; and those who most need to learn are brought under the close superintendence of those who, from their external circumstances, are best qualified to teach. And this is evidently the true notion of Christian servitude.

Religion binds every master, by a solemn engagement, to watch over the soul of his servant. It says to masters, "Give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." It bids us take care, that our "man-servant and maid-servant" do no (needless) work on the Sabbath. "If," says Job, "I did despise the cause of my man-servant or maid-servant, . . . what shall I do when God riseth up?" "If," says the Apostle, "any provide not for his own, specially for those of his own house, he . . . . is worse than an infidel." From these, and many similar passages, it is obvious that the Lord expects large and solemn duties, not merely from the servant to the master, but from the master to the servant. And how wise and merciful is the appointment which requires these duties! Consider the narrow education of many persons in that condition of life; the peculiar temptations to which they are exposed, by change of situation, by variety of companions, by the facility afforded them of doing wrong, by the erroneous maxims prevalent, upon almost all subjects, among the particular class to which they belong. Consider, on the other hand, the natural influence which rank, property, authority, and the opportunities of daily and hourly inspection, give to the master over the servant; and you will at once see the importance of the obligation which requires you to guide them into the way of truth, to show them the plague of their heart, and lead them to the only Friend who can heal their corruptions, and forgive their sins. But, my brethren, if these statements are just, how obviously is it the duty of every man, who professes the religion of Christ, solemnly and honestly to ask himself, in what degree he discharges these indispensable duties to his servants.—I am not, of course, presuming to determine the precise amount of religious care and instruction which every head of a family is able to bestow upon the members of it. "To his own master" each individual "standeth

or falleth." But I may inquire, in general, whether we are all endeavouring, with vigour and perseverance, to employ the means which in our conscience we believe to be most conducive to the religious welfare of those committed to us; whether we are assembling our servants in family prayer; whether we are cautiously avoiding the society and habits by which they would be likely to be corrupted; whether we are abstaining even from the appearance of evil in their sight; whether our conduct towards them is calculated to wean them from the world, and to draw them to the holy and happy service of their Redeemer and their God? The notion of many individuals appears to be, that, having used, paid, and discharged their servants, they have done with them. ALAS! No. We have a new and far heavier account to settle with each other at the bar of God; and wo be, either to the servants or masters, who disregard this final settlement! who live here as though this state of existence were all, and as though the relations begun upon earth were not to affect our condition through all eternity! Let every man, who would come to the bar of God with an easy conscience, endeavour so to live as that, under the Divine blessing, each individual shall leave his house a better person than he entered it.

Having thus, in the first place, considered who are to be the objects of care and instruction to the head of a family, I come to consider,

II. What is the NATURE OF THE INSTRUCTION HE IS TO COMMUNICATE TO THOSE IN WHOM HE IS SO DEEPLY INTERESTED.—It is said in the text, "*I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.*" His attention, therefore, will be directed to two points,—the discharge of their duties to God and to man.

1. In the first place, he will endeavour to lead them

to a *faithful discharge of their duties to God.*—It is indeed the conception of some deluded persons, that they sufficiently fulfil their duty to their children or servants by endeavouring to make them good members of society. But can a line of proceeding which looks only to this world, and consigns those dependent upon us to the awful risks, or rather to the inevitable miseries, of eternity, satisfy the demands of God, or even of common humanity? Can the child, or the servant, who is the most complete in the discharge of his obligations to an earthly parent or master, be said to "*keep the way of the Lord?*" Has the Great Author of their being—the God who, when they slumbered amidst their kindred atoms, formed them into men—the God who, when they had forfeited their happiness, visited and redeemed them—the God who follows them with his love, sanctifies them by his Spirit, crowns them with loving-kindness—has He no claims upon their affection and service? May they walk abroad on this theatre of his wonders and mercies, and not recognise the Mighty Spirit by whom all is arranged and controlled? No, my brethren: yours is the office at once solemn and delightful of endeavouring, through the grace of God, to make them acquainted with a God as yet undiscovered, or disregarded, or forgotten; to bring them to a conviction of their lost estate as sinners; to lead them to the cross of a Redeemer; to wean them from the world; to unite them to their Father in heaven; to open to them the recesses of an invisible world; to show them the pure river of living water, the tree of life, the city which hath foundations, the Lord on his throne, and the seats of everlasting tranquillity and joy. How delightful an employment! What new sources of domestic happiness does it open to us! What fresh motives does it supply, for watchfulness, for affection, for prayer, for diligence, and, finally, for the practice of the almost discarded duty of staying at home!—Suppose these duties faithfully dis-

charged, and the Divine blessing to rest on them, what a sanctuary from sin and care would every house and family become! How would the father of it there retire, to refresh his spirit after the fatigues of business; and how would the mother of it there discover a charm denied to all the glittering circles of dissipation and folly! Our home would become our temple; and all who entered it would hear its chambers resound with the songs of gratitude and love.

2. But, in the next place, we are to instruct our families to keep the way of the Lord, by "*doing justice and judgment.*"—That individual will give to those connected with him a most imperfect conception of religion, who does not teach them that "faith if it hath not works is dead, being alone;" and that every real Christian will be a dutiful child, an honest servant, a faithful, humble, useful, and in every way valuable, member of society. Monstrous as the perversion is, it is possible for individuals, instead of bringing religion to the aid of morality, to substitute a round of religious observances, for the practical discharge of our every-day duties. It is your office, my brethren, to expose the delusion; to tear off the mask from such a religious profession, and show the individuals who wear it, that those who profess to "walk humbly with God," must also "do justly" and "love mercy." It is your office to teach them, by example as well as by precept, the necessity of conformity to the mind that was in Christ, and to the practice by which he adorned the principles of the Gospel. Instruct them, under God, to abhor a falsehood, whatever be the appellation it bears, or the object to which it is directed. Cultivate in them the spirit of lowliness, meekness, gentleness, sweetness, generosity, and ready obedience. Write, in fine, upon every wall of your house, as well as every action of your life, the golden rule of "doing unto others as we would they should do unto us."

III. But I come now briefly to consider THE BLESSING PROMISED IN THE TEXT TO ABRAHAM, IN THE DISCHARGE OF THESE DOMESTIC DUTIES.

1. And here, in the first place, a certain measure of success appears to be promised, with regard *to the individuals who are thus instructed to keep the way of the Lord.* "They shall *keep*," it is said, "the way of the Lord."—It is true, indeed, that some pious parents and masters appear to labour in their families in vain. The child, or the servant, in some instances, refuses to hear the voice of the "charmer, charm he never so wisely." The heart may, even through a series of years, present a surface of rock to the labours of the most diligent cultivator. In this case, we can only lament, and earnestly persevere in prayer to the Lord of the vineyard, that he would break up the rugged soil, and shed the dews of his grace upon the barren surface. Nevertheless, such is the strong influence possessed by the parent or master of a family; such the success ordinarily granted to his faithful labours; such the promises of Scripture made to individuals so striving for God and their family; that, perhaps, every man who is wholly unsuccessful has fair reason at least for serious inquiry *whether the fault is not in himself.* Who, in the first instance, would have been disposed to charge the sins of the family of Eli, or of David, in the smallest degree, upon the parents? But it is said of Eli, that "his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not;" and of David, that he had never "displeased" Adonijah. I cannot but remind those, whether parents or masters, who are endeavouring to be faithful to their high trust, of the final history of the individual to whom the text especially applies,—that he had Isaac for a son—and that, perhaps, the most interesting picture exhibited in Scripture, of a faithful servant, is to be found in the history of his family. May every devout labourer in the little field of domestic duty, find ample encouragement in this statement!

2. But, lastly, where the perverseness of the child, or of the servant, is such as to frustrate our hopes and endeavours, it is still promised that such labours shall be *abundantly returned into our own bosoms.*—In the text, the fact that Abraham will so teach his children and his family, is assigned as a reason why the Lord will "bring upon Abraham the things he hath spoken of him;" that is, why he will fulfil to him the promises of the covenant he had made with him. The world, my brethren, may overlook you in the quiet discharge of your domestic duties; but God sees, and knows, and distinguishes, and blesses you. The prayers you offer, if unsuccessful for others, will, like the vapours descending in fertilizing showers to the earth from which they were exhaled, fall back in abundant blessings upon your own bosom. Go forward, therefore, ye simple and holy labourers, in the discharge of those delightful duties, under the happy assurance that you shall, by the power and grace of the Redeemer, either "save yourselves" or "those who hear you."—It is recorded of the individual thus instructing his family "to keep the way of the Lord," that he "was old, and well stricken in years;" and that "the Lord *had blessed him in all things.*" It was thus, that the blessing which he, perhaps in some instances fruitlessly, laboured to impart to another was bestowed on himself; and that he sank to his grave rich in all those possessions which may cheer us amidst the agonies of dissolving nature, or fit us for the presence of the Great Judge.

It is my wish, in concluding these observations, to address myself chiefly to two classes of individuals.

1. In the first place, let me say a few words to those who feel a disposition to complain, that, although they appear to themselves to have faithfully pursued the object of family instruction, they have hitherto pursued it altogether without success.

I have already very briefly adverted to the case of

those families in which no reproach can be passed upon the individuals to whose management they are committed, and where the blame lies, not with the teacher, but with the learner. Let me, however, solemnly repeat the warning to those, whether children or servants, who thus repel every means employed to teach or influence their hearts. Shall I remind such persons who it is that are to be "beaten with many stripes?" or what is the wo denounced on those who harden the neck against reproof? What, let me ask you, is to touch your souls, if the affectionate watchful guardianship of those thus intimately connected with you does not? What new resources for your improvement can be applied? Must you not be considered as, at least, approaching to the state of those on whom the best medicine for their disease has been tried, and tried altogether in vain? Are you not, if the word of God is to be believed, "treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath?" May a compassionate God have mercy upon you! May your hard heart be broken by the hammer of his word! May you flee, ere it is too late, to that Lord, who from the cross is still, in the tenderness of his love, spreading wide his arms to welcome you! "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help."

But, my brethren, whilst I am willing to allow that there are examples of minds thus rejecting the affectionate and devout instruction of those set over them; and whilst I deeply mourn over such cases; I must be permitted, in Christian honesty, to say, that I fear many of the cases of irreligious children and servants are to be traced, in a considerable degree at least, to the criminal neglect of those to whom the guardianship of their souls is committed. I do not mean to affirm, that in the families, especially of those professing an interest in the subject of religion, the obvious duty of family prayer is neglected: but, then, how coldly, formally, and inertly is that duty apt to be discharged!

Nor is it my intention to deny that some commentary on Scripture is not occasionally, or perhaps regularly, read in such families; but, then, how little pains is taken to give that reading effect, by earnestness, simplicity, feeling, affection, in the person who reads! How seldom do the heads of families converse with the members of those families on the all-important subjects of religion! how seldom speak with them as from man to man; as from one dying creature to another; as from a sinner, perhaps rescued from the pit of perdition, to another sinner still hovering on its edge! How seldom do we find the parents and children of a family seated with the Scripture in their hands, and together endeavouring with united hearts to draw water from the wells of salvation! What, let me moreover ask, is the probable influence of your own character upon your families? Do they find, that religion sweetens your temper, enlarges your liberality, teaches you self-denial, invigorates your habits of usefulness, disposes you to live less for yourself, and more for all the world; lifts you above the cares and anxieties of the world, into the higher region of tranquillity, and love, and joy? Are we not sometimes compelled to enter families where we discover nothing of religion but a dry belief in its doctrines? What results, my brethren, are to be expected from habits such as these? what promise is there to the negligent? Is this also a day of miracles; and has the Prophet only, as in the days of the Egyptians, to wave his wand, and will the plague of the heart vanish, and health be poured over the diseased in soul?

2. But let me turn from this topic, to address myself, in conclusion, to those faithful, lowly, devout labourers in the duties of a family, whose prayers and watchfulness have been in some measure rewarded, through the compassion of their God, with correspondent success; and who are at this moment enjoying one of the highest privileges of which this state of existence is productive, that of seeing a rich harvest

spring up under their own cultivation, and can look round with delighted hearts on the smiling faces of a family rejoicing in the Lord.

Christian brethren, you know by whose strength this object has been accomplished, and to whom the song of gratitude must arise: "Praise the Lord, O my soul: While I live will I praise the Lord; yea, as long as I have my being I will sing praises unto my God." An arm of flesh hath not done this—but "the Lord hath gotten himself the victory." Endeavour, then, in the spirit of gratitude and love, to meet the blessing with corresponding emotions. Set it against a thousand disappointments and sorrows. Carry it about with you, as an antidote to the almost certain trials of life. What matters it that we may not be able to push our children up the slippery path of fame; that we cannot colour their cheeks with the glow of health; that we cannot open up to them mines of worldly wealth? If they are the real servants of the Lord their God, they are the possessors of present peace, and the inheritors of the kingdom of glory. And when many of the distinguished of this world shall be sinking to their "own place," these, perhaps neglected or despised inhabitants of a wicked world, shall "lift up their heads with joy," and spread their wings, and soar away into the unruffled serenity and never-ending joys of their Father's presence. May these visions of hope and joy be accomplished to ourselves, my brethren! May we hear a voice saying, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generation, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee!" May that blessing of the Lord, which is in the dwelling of the righteous, be upon you! May you labour in your families patiently, affectionately, devoutly, successfully! May you rise to heaven accompanied by every one of those whom the Father of the universe has consigned to your guardianship upon earth!

SERMON XV.

THE JOURNEY OF LIFE.

NUMB. x. 29.

We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.

THE language of the text is that of Moses to his idolatrous father-in-law, Hobab. Concerned that one so dear to him, one to whom he was bound by such solemn and tender ties, should quit the camp of the Lord and return to the idols of Midian, he urges him, in these touching and affectionate terms, to remain with the people of God, to cast in his lot among them, and in their company to pursue his way to the land of promise and joy. "Come with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

It is my wish, however, instead of dwelling on the private history of the distinguished individual by whom these words were uttered, to give them the wider application of which they are obviously capable, and to gather from them those more general lessons which they are calculated to teach. And to this end I shall consider them,

I. As DESCRIPTIVE OF THE GENERAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD;

II. As suggesting THEIR DUTY WITH REGARD TO THE MULTITUDES AROUND THEM; and,

III. As pointing out THE MOTIVE BY WHICH THEY ARE ANIMATED IN THE DISCHARGE OF THAT DUTY.

And may that merciful God, who watched over the march of his people in the wilderness, be with us in the present inquiry!

I. In the first place, then, we are to consider the text as DESCRIPTIVE OF THE GENERAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

And it would be difficult, I think, to find language more descriptive of those circumstances: "*We are journeying unto a place of which the Lord said, I will give it you.*"

There is a world, my brethren, as holy as this is impure; as substantial as this is empty; as peaceful as this is perturbed; as permanent as this is fugitive and uncertain, to which our God has directed us, and which he has promised to his real servants. And how delightful is the path by which we are permitted to approach that world! Consider, for instance, the many fruits and flowers which are scattered by the way,—peace of conscience, communion with God, and the innumerable and daily gifts of his providence and love. Consider, also, the security of the path—of which it is said, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon;" but where the presence of the Lord is "a wall on the right hand and on the left." Consider, likewise, the many bright and cheering prospects opened to us in our progress—what occasional views of the deep recesses of the invisible world; what glimpses of eternity, of the region of unbroken tranquillity and unclouded joy! Consider, moreover, the friends who accompany us on this journey; and that if, by pursuing

our way with steadiness and devotion, we forfeit the approbation of a few, whose attachment is comparatively of little worth, we gain other friends, fonder and more faithful,—friends for both worlds; friends of the soul, as well as of the body; friends who are charitable to us, because they are severe to themselves; and who forget our faults in the anxious and mournful contemplation of their own. Consider, also, who has preceded us in our appointed path,—that our Redeemer has encountered the same difficulties; and has left, as it were, at every stage in the wilderness, a blessing for his people to gather up and apply to the consolation of their aching hearts. Consider, also, the great and glorious Guide who accompanies us,—that it is the especial office of the Holy Spirit to go with his people, and conduct them to the resting-place where they would be. And, lastly, consider the point which is expressly touched upon in the text,—"We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, *I will give it you.*" How weighty is this last topic of encouragement to the servant of God! 'What is it to me,' might the dejected penitent say, 'that there is a city which hath foundations; whose streets are of pure gold, and like unto clear glass; whose foundations are of precious stones, and whose gates are pearls! a city which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof? What matters it to me that a region of rest and joy is displayed to the creatures of God? How can I reach it? Who shall give me the necessary strength? Who shall show me the way? Who shall invest me, guilty and impure as I am, with a right to the tree of life, and a title to take possession of that privileged country?' Let the text reply, It is the land which "God hath given you." The land of promise was not more distinctly granted to the Israelites, than is the region of glory to you. We cannot, indeed, see it. The discoveries of human science shall never pene-

trate the depths in which it lies concealed. We cannot merit an entrance into it: but what of this? hath not God said, I "give it you:" "I give unto my sheep eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand:" "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also?" And is not the Son of God familiar with that world? Did he not speak it into existence? Are not its glories the faint reflection of His glory? Are not all the spirits which range over it, the delighted subjects of His empire, and agents of His will? And cannot He invest you with indisputable rights to all the joys and distinctions bought by his blood, and sealed to the contrite and believing by his Spirit? In the hour of doubt, my Christian brethren; in the season of peril and grief, when the workings of corruption within, or the assaults of the enemy without, cast a shade over your hopes, and dim the prospects of futurity; lift up your eyes to the throne of the Ancient of Days, and listen to the cheering declaration, "I will give it you;" and go on your way thankful and rejoicing.

II. But it is time that I should come, secondly, to consider the DUTY OF THE CHRISTIAN WITH RESPECT TO OTHERS, WHICH IS SUGGESTED BY THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEXT.

How simply and beautifully does the language of Moses to his father-in-law express the feeling which must dwell in the breast of every man who, having himself in some measure discovered the misery of sin, and the all-sufficiency of his Redeemer to meet the wants and wishes of the heart, finds himself surrounded by those who have not yet made these important discoveries!

Look first at the nature of the invitation given by Moses to his father-in-law: "*Come thou with us.*"—

One of the earliest errors, of any considerable moment, in the church of Christ, was that of devout men retiring to caves, or high pillars in the desert, for purposes of worship and meditation; thus cutting off the connexion between themselves and the rest of mankind; and taking it for granted that the servant of God has no other duty to discharge, in a world of trial and danger, than to provide for his own peace and security. In after ages, this same error, the joint offspring of enthusiasm and idleness, made the deepest inroads on the church; and wherever Popery prevailed, these sullen, cold, selfish, unprofitable, and unscriptural practices, more or less followed in her train. Even at this moment, several of the finest portions of Europe may be said to be withering under the influence of the monastic spirit. Religion, divested of that charity which is one of the brightest jewels in her crown, has become odious to society, and destructive of its best interests.—The spirit of the Gospel, my Christian brethren, is large, and liberal, and uniting. It unlocks the heart, and spreads wide the arms to all who may either profit ourselves or receive any advantage from our society. I may say, indeed, that a cordial and active disposition to make others "partakers of the benefit"—to throw open to them the gate of life—to invite them to the marriage-feast of the Redeemer—to lead them, as poor, wounded, wandering, bleeding, creatures, to the Great Physician of their souls, is inseparable from true religion. It is true of men distinguished in the various departments of human skill and science, that they may themselves excel, without feeling any desire to impart their attainments to others. The eminent scholar, or soldier, or artist, for example, may carry about with him the foul defect of a narrow, illiberal heart, without any direct impeachment of his skill or completeness in his particlar employment. But this indifference to the attainments of others in religion, cannot co-exist with real piety. The question of the Apostle is unanswerable:

"He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" And the love of our brother will inevitably display itself in a cordial desire to introduce him to all the joys and privileges of our common Father's house. In the pictures presented to us, in the pages of prophecy, of those days when real is to be substituted for nominal religion; when "the Spirit" is to be "poured" out, and "the wilderness" to be a "fruitful field;" a disposition to awaken and invite others to a share in the joys of the kingdom, is always described as universally prevalent. "Many people," declares the Prophet Isaiah, "shall go, and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob." "The children of Israel," says the Prophet Jeremiah, "shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."—May more and more of this social and beneficent feeling, my Christian brethren, prevail among ourselves!—Allow me to remind you, that the worst man whom you know has too much in common with yourself, and too much that is of value in the eyes of your Redeemer, to be cast aside as a worthless branch. He is a man for whom Christ died; and can his eternal condition be a matter of indifference to a professed follower of Christ?

But consider, moreover, the motive by which Moses urges his father-in-law to join the camp of Israel: "Come thou," he says, "with us, and *we will do thee good.*"—And here is the distinct object which every Christian should propose to himself, in thus seeking to unite others to his company. It is possible to desire the alliance of others, simply from a regard to self-interest, or self-aggrandizement, in order to confirm our own wavering opinion, or sanction our falling party.

To name such motives for union, is, I need scarcely say, at once to pronounce a sentence of condemnation upon them. The simple desire of the Christian, in his commerce with the godly or the ungodly, must be this,—either to *get* good, or to *do* good; and more than this both cometh of evil and must lead to it.

And here, my brethren, let us pause for a moment, to consider in what degree the example of Moses, in the text, bears on ourselves, placed, as we are, amidst the crowded ranks of a giddy and wicked world.

Well might he, when he saw one so intimately united to himself standing with grey hairs on the very edge of the grave, with no God but a god of wood or stone—and when he looked, from the desolate circumstances of this poor idolater, to the camp of the Lord, and called to mind the miracles of love and power which had been wrought for the people of God—well might he anxiously desire for him admission into the covenant of grace, and a participation in the joys of the promised land. But, my brethren, in the circumstances of the millions by whom we are surrounded, is there nothing which is calculated to touch our sympathies, and awaken in us the strongest desires to "pluck them as brands from the burning," and to acquaint them with all the privileges and joys of the Gospel?

Look, for instance, at *the gross sinner.* Is he not walking from day to day in the path which inevitably leads to perdition? Is not the pit whose smoke ascendeth for ever and ever, opening its mouth upon him? And is there no reason for saying to him, with tenderness, and with a zeal that will not be refused, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good?"

Look, next, at *the man of the world*—at that poor deluded person, who conceives that the honours and interests of this life are every thing; that he is sufficiently serving God by abstaining from gross offences, and by surrounding himself and his family with present comforts and indulgences; whilst at every point of his

progress the Giver of his comforts and the Saviour of his soul is either forgotten, or remembered with coldness and indifference. Is there not a Voice which has said to that individual, "the friendship of the world is enmity with God;" "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him?" And is there no reason for saying to such a person, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good?"

Look, again, at the *mere formalist in religion*—at the individual who, escaping from the offences of either of those classes, yet knows nothing of the power of religion; nothing of communion with God; of the compassion and worth of his Redeemer; of delighted meditation on his love; of the brightness of his promises; of the joys of the world of spirits. Have you no sympathy for such an individual? Will you not describe to him the worthlessness of the dead form, without the animating spirit—the curse which rests on the people who draw nigh to God with their lips, while the heart is far from him? Will you not endeavour to draw him within the circle in which the devoted Christian lives, and expatiates in the joys of religion and the love of his God? Will you not show him the delight of hoping, and believing, and loving; of prayer, of devout reading, of a spirit of gratitude, and a life of faith; of the hope which is as the anchor of the soul; of the joy which is unspeakable and full of glory?—My Christian brethren, I must repeat the declaration, that an eagerness to help, to bless, to save the lost sinner; to fix the wavering, to instruct the ignorant, to lead on the hesitating, to build up the church of the Redeemer, is absolutely *inseparable* from true religion. If you are a genuine disciple of Him who died for the world, his spirit will be yours; his words yours; his actions yours; his temper of endurance, charity, sympathy, labour for God and for his creatures, yours; and, like him, you will be willing to live and to die here, that others may live eternally. The language of the text,

in short, will be the language of your lips and heart: "*Come thou with us, and we will do thee good*"—come with us, and we will strive, by the grace of God, to reach your heart; to pluck the world out of it; to fill you with the love of God and your Redeemer; to rescue you from disappointment, from that brow of care, from that state of hurry, and tumult, and feverish anxiety about treasures and honours, which few can get and none can keep; and give you treasures which wax not old, and a crown of glory which fadeth not away.

Or, look at that *giddy, trifling person*, living for dress, for folly, for dissipation; decorating the perishing body, but neglecting the immortal soul. Is there no curse gone forth also against her? Is she not a "lover of pleasure, more than a lover of God?" And will you not endeavour to warn, to instruct, and to save her? Shall we not tell her, that the gaities of life will not profit in the day of wrath? Shall we not invite her to purer pleasures and nobler intimacies—to the enjoyment of the Divine presence; to the songs of angels;—to enter with us that country of which God is the light and the glory, and where his people shall dwell with him for ever?

III. But I come, thirdly, to consider the motive suggested by the text for the discharge of those duties to others of which we have now spoken: "Come thou with us," it is said, "and we will do thee good; FOR THE LORD HATH SPOKEN GOOD CONCERNING ISRAEL."

When our advice is solicited as to many of the topics of worldly speculation, who is there, with some experience of life, that does not shrink from giving any very decisive opinion? The inaccuracy of human calculations—our blindness to the future—the various and conflicting evils and benefits attendant upon almost every decision suggested by mere human reason—all indispose us to recommend to any person a particular

profession, or residence, or alliance. But as to the one great subject of religion; as to the advantage of an immediate, hearty, unfaltering, affectionate dedication of the soul to God and the Redeemer, there can be no doubt even for a moment. This matter is involved in no uncertainty: here we are able to speak out and say, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." And if the reason be asked for the decisive and unequivocal language we are able to use on this subject, I know not that it is possible to state it in more simple and expressive terms than those employed in the text: "*The Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.*" On other subjects we are perplexed by the infirmity of human reason, or the conflict of human authority; but on this subject "God hath spoken," and we can doubt and hesitate no longer. Philosophers may be mistaken; human systems and theories are often illusory and worthless; but "the word of the Lord endureth for ever." "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it; or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

And, my brethren, how just is the declaration that "God hath spoken *good* concerning Israel,"—concerning his church and his people; concerning the man who has taken Christ as his portion, and who, wrapped in the robe of his Redeemer's righteousness, pursues the path of duty with a lowly, devout, believing mind! Open the book of God, and at what page does not some light break in, to assure the soul of the doubtful, and cheer the trembling pilgrim on his way? What are the circumstances in which support is not promised? Where does not the eye and the love of the Great Shepherd follow us? Has not the voice gone forth, "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart;" "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established;" "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" "He that

overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death?" And how confident is the appeal to the stability of the Divine promises! "Ye know, in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you." They *have* not failed, my brethren, and they *shall* not: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Still, therefore, may you build the mansion of your hopes on the broad and unshaken basis of the Divine promises. Still may you anticipate every blessing which the holy record has proclaimed to you. Still may you "hope in the Lord," till expectation is exchanged for joy, amidst the eternal realities and delights of his kingdom.

And now, my brethren, allow me, in conclusion, to suggest to you two practical inquiries, to which the text naturally conducts us.

1. In the first place, then, in considering this subject, I have, to a considerable extent, addressed you as persons who might with propriety issue the invitation of the text to others: "Come with us, for we will do thee good." But you must allow me to ask, whether the union of others with yourself; the adoption of your opinions, tempers, and pursuits; would, in fact, be calculated to impart a benefit to them? Are your habits such as would be likely to bring them nearer to God, to holiness, to heaven? Has your life the clear stamp and superscription of the Gospel upon it? Is it no doubtful character which you exhibit? Does not the "trumpet give an uncertain sound?" Are you abstaining even from the appearance of evil? How delicate, and even sensitive, was the conscience of the Apostle on these points! "I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Few considerations are more awful, my Christian brethren, than those which respect the full influence of our own example upon others. Numerous, it is to

be feared, are the individuals who shall never know, till they are revealed by the trumpet of the archangel, the terrible results of their own inconsistency and faithlessness. Then it is that the horrible conviction will flash on our minds. Then will the servant, or child, or neighbour—betrayed by our negligence or neutrality, by our slowness to warn, to rebuke, to invite—cast his sins into the scale of our own, to sink us deeper in misery and perdition. Men and brethren, awake to this awful consideration! Christian ministers may do much, but they cannot do all. You, also, are to be "preachers of righteousness." Each man in his sphere is to act his part; and to pray and labour, that he may bring to God that portion of the family of the Redeemer which is consigned to his especial influence and example.

2. But, secondly, if you may humbly hope, that, with a due allowance for human infirmity, your own example is in itself calculated to be thus beneficial, I would next ask, whether this important influence is diligently and zealously employed. Is the voice of invitation frequently heard from your lips, "Come thou with us, for we will do thee good?" Is your spirit social, enlarged, sympathizing, benevolent? Every other part of creation is fulfilling its destiny. The sun rises as a giant to run his course: the moon walks in her brightness: the stars roll on in unbroken harmony: the rivers pour their fertilizing streams over the earth. Are you also found at your post, alive to your duties, and offering your daily tribute of love, and gratitude, and obedience to God? Does your "sphere shine with your fair example?" Is your influence distinctly felt in your family and neighbourhood? Can your ministers lean upon your assistance; cast a portion of their burden upon you, rely upon your prayers, your sympathy, your co operation?—Brethren, it is a glorious destiny to which you are called, to be "fellow-workers with God" in the great scheme of salvation.

Shake yourselves from the dust of a dishonourable indolence and repose, and go forth, strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. The time is short, but the success of the faithful labourer is certain: "My word shall not return unto me void;" and that word has "spoken good" concerning the Israel of God. Live for God, and for the benefit of his creatures; and he shall fulfil his own gracious promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

SERMON XVI.

HOPELESSNESS OF IMPROVEMENT EXPOSED AND CONDEMNED.

JER. xviii. 12.

There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.

THERE are two kinds of despair, between which it is of importance to distinguish. In the first place, there is *a despair of mercy;* which, whatever be its source, whether unbelief, or the direct visitation of God for sin, or erroneous views of religion, or a depressed state of bodily health, is one of the severest trials to which human nature can be subjected. In other cases of suffering, the mind often assists us to sustain the calamities of the body; but, "a wounded spirit, who can bear?" In this case the mind is itself the tormentor; and the man, as it has been said, falls like the bird struck by an arrow feathered from its own wing. Happily, however, this species of despair is less common than some would pretend; and, in a large proportion of those cases in which it really exists, is a subject rather for the physician of the body than of the soul.

The species of despair, or rather of hopelessness, to which it is my wish on the present occasion to call your attention, is of far more frequent occurrence: it is *the despair of improvement.* With the high scriptural

model before us, in the character of our Lord and his Apostles, why is it that multitudes calmly, and without disquietude, acquiesce in the notion that their present low attainments in religion are all that is required of them? Some, doubtless, from other causes; but many from this, that they despair of the advancement which they profess to desire. Large is the number of persons who, dead in feeling, and inaccurate in practice, nevertheless consider themselves as having reached the highest point possible to themselves—who seem to regard their present state as their unalterable destiny—and who, therefore, sit down without any serious effort at improvement, or preparation for the inquisition and judgment of the great day. Such appears to have been the condition of the individuals described by the Prophet Malachi: "It is in vain to serve God: what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?"—and such the state of the individuals described in the text, who said, "There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart."

This frame of mind appears to me to be both sufficiently common and mischievous to merit a careful examination; and it is my intention, in dependence upon the Divine blessing, to consider, on the present occasion,

I. Some of the SOURCES OF THIS DESPAIR OF AMENDMENT.

II. Some of the MOTIVES FOR ENDEAVOURING TO ESCAPE FROM IT.

I. In the first place, then, we are to consider some of the chief SOURCES OF THIS DESPAIR OF AMENDMENT.

1. The first and most common that I should name, is *indolence*.—It is the property of that quality of mind to be always seeking an apology for leaving things as

they are. Sometimes it imagines difficulties, and sometimes dangers, neither of which have any real existence: "The way of the slothful man," saith Solomon, "is as a hedge of thorns;" and again, "The slothful man says, There is a lion without: I shall be slain in the streets." Few of us, my brethren, are sufficiently aware of the length and breadth of our own indisposition to toil and exertion. There is what may be termed a *vis inertiæ*, a power of indolence, in mind as well as in matter; and, perhaps, at the great day of account, it will be found, that where profligacy has slain its thousands, indolence has slain its ten thousands. Great indeed is the necessity of urging every human being, in the language of one Apostle, to "give diligence to make his calling and election sure;" and in that of another, to "work out" his "salvation with fear and trembling."

2. A second source of this species of hopelessness, is *the secret love of sin.*—If we love a particular indulgence, how easily do we persuade ourselves of its lawfulness! If we wish to be bad, how ready are we to believe that it is impossible to be better! In such a state of mind, unwillingness is confounded with inability; and we complain of wanting the means, when, in fact, all that we need is the disposition. How easy is it to see the truth of this statement, as it applies to the case of another! An individual assures us, that he finds it *impossible* to escape from a particular habit, to break with a particular society, to devote himself to a particular pursuit; and, having rebuked him for thus treating that as impossible in its nature which is in fact only distasteful to himself, we retire from him, perhaps to offend, and to shelter our offences under the very apology we have condemned in him. My Christian brethren, our own secret love of sin is the fruitful parent of a thousand transgressions which are charged upon the appointments of God, or the constitution of things, or even the direct temptations of the devil. "God

tempteth no man." God "would not that any should perish." "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." It is "lust, when it hath conceived," that "bringeth forth sin." The fallen heart is that marsh of corruption, in which all things monstrous and mischievous find their birth and their dwelling-place, and from whence they issue to the destruction of the peace of the individual, and the injury of those around him.

3. A third source of this hopelessness of amendment, is *a want of faith* in the declaration of God.—Is it credible that any man should think it impossible to rise to the highest attainments in religion, who reasons upon these subjects with the Bible in his hand? Will a merciful God command impossibilities? and yet he says, "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect:" "Be ye holy, as God is holy." Will the holy God promise what he will not perform? Listen, then, first to the language of the Old Testament: "The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." In like manner, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you: a new heart also will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." How strong is this language! The "heart of stone" may be exchanged for the "heart of flesh;" a state of utter insensibility, for a state of feeling, and energy, and power.—Listen, in like manner, to the language of the New Testament: "God," says the Apostle to the corrupt Corinthians, "is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye, having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work;" and, in another place, "My grace is sufficient for you." Without multiplying quotations of a similar import, I may surely now ask, What is the limit to the hopes of advancement in religion inspired by those

which have been already adduced? What is the point at which they either require or authorize us to check the career of improvement? If we believe, is it not the fact that all things, in the way of advancement, are possible to us? Set aside, if it were possible, the willingness of a God of mercy to pity, to convert, to sanctify, and to establish his people; and then to despair of growth in grace, and in the knowledge and love of God and of his creatures, might be reasonable. But, in the case of one who actually believes in the Divine promises, such despondency ought to be out of the question. Faith and Hope, if I may use the allusion, are twin stars in the horizon of the Christian. Let Faith arise, and Hope follows, gilding with its sweet and refreshing ray every dark chamber of the mind, and every lonely recess in the path of duty. "Believest thou," said the Apostle to a professed Jew, "believest thou the Prophets?" In the same manner may we ask of the professed Christian, Believest thou the Gospel? believest thou the testimony of God? believest thou the precious volume of his promises? If so, despair of amendment is impossible: God hath spoken, and shall he not make it good? But I shall have occasion presently to return to this topic.

Having now stated what appear to me to be some of the sources of this species of hopelessness in the mind, I proceed, as it was proposed, to consider,

II. SOME OF THE MOTIVES FOR ENDEAVOURING TO ESCAPE FROM IT. Of these, out of many which suggest themselves, it may be sufficient for me to name three.

1. In the first place, we may surely say of this despair of amendment, that it is altogether *groundless*. If it is conceived not to be so, I must ask, On what is this conception grounded? On the fact of *your own want of success?* But will you venture to say, that, wherever you have faithfully applied the means, you have

not secured the end?—On the fact of *the failure of others?* But where is the man, who, with "good courage," and "in the strength of the Lord," has fought the battle, without winning the victory?—On *the character of the Gospel?* Surely, my brethren, the promises which have been read to you, and which are merely a few gathered out of a mighty volume of similar declarations, breathe nothing of discouragement to the returning sinner; to the man aspiring after closer communion with God, greater intimacy with his Redeemer, or closer conformity to the Divine image. I said that the language of Scripture was strong, when it promised to exchange the heart of stone for the heart of flesh. But the word of God employs, as to this point, language and imagery even still more forcible. "Come," says the Prophet, to the very nation who employed the hopeless language of the text; "come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up: after two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." Behold, then, the power which your God is willing to employ for your deliverance. He will not merely give health to the deceased, but *life to the dead.* Imagine even your case to be as bad as possible. Suppose yourself to have passed beyond all the ordinary boundaries of corruption and transgression;—conceive not merely the spark of holiness to burn dimly, but to be at this moment apparently extinct;—suppose not only the spiritual health impaired, but the soul in a sense "dead"—still I am privileged, on the authority of God, to affirm, that this death is not necessarily either final or fatal. It is to be considered rather as suspension than extinction. It is a state from which your Redeemer is willing to raise you. The same Voice which said to Lazarus, "Come forth," says to you, Arise from the grave of sin; awake from the death of transgression; come forth from the sepulchre in which all that

is good, and great, and holy, and happy, are at present buried, and live to God and holiness. In the strength of the Lord, obey the call, my Christian brethren; and though you may come forth, as it were, in the "grave-clothes" of infirmity and corruption, and bear about with you for a time many marks and relics of your former miserable condition, you shall, under the grace of your Redeemer, be daily more and more clothed with the features and energies of the living man, of the sanctified, and devoted, and rejoicing servant of a crucified Lord. "You," it is said to the Ephesians, "hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." And I may add to yourselves, You *will* he quicken, if you will surrender yourselves wholly and unreservedly to his power and compassion.

2. In the second place, under this head, the despair of amendment is *irrational*.—Upon this point, however, I need scarcely insist, because, whatever disposition of mind is opposed to that will of God which we have been already considering, is by that single circumstance proved to be in the highest degree irrational. Right reason in every instance demands an implicit acquiescence in the revealed will of God.—But, my brethren, I name the unreasonableness of this despondency of improvement, on purpose to touch on a particular point. Suppose the Scriptures to be far less decisive on the subject than they are; yet your present doubts or cold acquiescence in a low state of attainment, and consequent inactivity in religion, are altogether irrational. For if it be possible that you *may* fail by the one process, it is certain that you *must* fail by the other. If the success of vigilance and prayer be equivocal, the ruin which must follow despair is inevitable. Besides, I must be permitted to say to that class of persons who feel disposed to complain, that all their efforts to draw near to God and obtain a larger measure of his grace have been useless, that perhaps they are deceived. It is possible, that, however unconsciously, you may

have advanced: it is possible sin has less dominion over you than it once possessed: it is possible that you enjoy a larger portion of the Divine favour. Perhaps the all-wise Judge and Father of his erring creatures is delaying some of the comforts of religion, merely to prompt you to more devout prayers, and secure to you that more extended advancement which is essential to the perfection of your religious character. Perhaps it is but another strong effort of faith; it is but once more laying hold of the Cross of Christ,—once more pleading his inestimable merits,—once more casting yourself on the mercy of God; adding to prayer, importunity, —to vigilance, perseverance; and the spell will be broken, the heart set free, and every barrier removed; and the passions and appetites, which to-day, like the army of Sennacherib besieging the walls of Jerusalem, encircle you, and threaten your destruction, will, like that army, disperse before the presence of the Lord, and leave you with indisputable possession of the field of contest. Will you, then, halt, perhaps on the very edge of victory? Will you stop on the very confines of the land of promise? Will you not inflict, what, it may be hoped, is the last blow on the half-destroyed enemy; and crush the head of that old serpent who already lies maimed in the path?

3. But, in the third place, such despair of growth in grace and holiness is *deeply guilty*.—There is, my brethren, a sort of morbid humility on this subject, which leads men to value themselves on those doubts in the compassionate promises of God, which are in fact nothing short of a capital offence against him. Is the earthly parent flattered by his children refusing to place confidence in his declarations of pity and love? And can the God of truth and compassion be gratified to find that, in spite of the language of Scripture, of his past dealings with his creatures, and in the constant experience of his church, we should still presume to question his mercies, and doubt whether *He*, who

spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, will with him also give us all things? Surely, my brethren, it is not too much to say of such despair of advancement in religion, ordinarily connected as it is with a distrust of the promises of God, that it represents sin as stronger than God; that it is a direct impeachment of the Divine veracity; that it undervalues the efficacy of a Saviour's blood, and does despite to the Spirit of Grace. Let me, then, say to individuals who are tempted to such despair, in the language of the Prophet, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "Why," when God calls you to holiness and joy, will you not obey the call? "Why," when he provides a way to the Mercy-seat, will you not walk in it? "Why," when he would sprinkle you with the blood with which he is said to "sprinkle many nations," will you refuse to be cleansed? "Why" will you sit down the poor, cold, half-converted, half-sanctified creature which you now perhaps are? "Why," when you might have the "mind which is in Christ Jesus;" when you might have "fellowship with the Father and with the Son;" when you might be "one" with "the Father, even as Christ is one with him;" when you might here possess an ever-present God, and hereafter expatiate in worlds of glory, dwell in the immediate presence of the Lord, drink of the river of his pleasures, and feed in the pastures of his joys;—why will you throw away your birthright; continue to slumber in the porch of the temple; and, by remaining half a Christian, rob yourself of all his privileges and joys?

In concluding our observations on this subject, I will venture to suppose a case, which it is most grateful to my own feelings to imagine,—that some few individuals may feel disposed to say, 'We are convinced that hopelessness of improvement is wrong; what would you have us to do?' That question would be better answered in a treatise, than in the concluding paragraph

of a sermon, but I will endeavour to collect the substance of the answer in the two following observations.

1. In the first place, you must propose to yourself *the very highest objects and attainments in religion.*— Nothing can be more evident, than that a large number of professing Christians are acquiescing in the conception, to which I have referred in an earlier part of this discourse, that in these latter ages a lower style and standard of Christianity is allowable than in the days of the Apostles; that, in fact, the progress in love and obedience, which was possible, or even easy, to St. Paul or St. John, is denied to us. But, my brethren, neither *probability* nor *fact* in the smallest degree warrant such an opinion. All *probability* is against it; for it is most unlikely that the demands of God should vary; that the standard of truth and practice should lower; that the uncompromising religion of an unchangeable God should conform itself to the degenerate habits of an ever-varying age. And as to the *fact*, what page of the Scripture warrants any such declension in the standard of religion? Where are we told that we are not to "press forward;" to "lay aside every weight;" to "run the race;" to "fight the good fight;" to "grow in grace;" to attain to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" to be "perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect?" And as Scripture asks of us all which was required of those first and best ages of the church, does it not also promise the same assistance? Is the "ear" of God "heavy," that it will not hear; or his "arm shortened," that it cannot save? Is he not the same ever-present Help and Refuge; the same "Advocate" for the weak; the same Comforter of the miserable; the same "Captain" and "Leader" of the bands of the Cross? Let not, therefore, any servant of the Redeemer fail to present to himself the purest model, and the most perfect standard of Christian attainment. And let him feel, that if he is not the best man in the world, it is only be-

cause he is not the most diligent in prayer, and the most earnest and steadfast in Christian vigilance and labour.

2. And this leads me to notice the only remaining topic. As you are to aim at the highest end in religion, so *you are carefully to adopt the best means of accomplishing that end.*—Although salvation be the one great business and object of life, and therefore every act of every hour is to be consecrated without deviation to that object, yet there are certain prescribed and peculiar means to which a peculiar blessing is promised. And as to these, vigilance, and energy, and a holy reliance on the promises of God in Christ, are indispensable. Of the multitude of external worshippers, there are, it is to be feared, many who never once sincerely worshipped. Of the numbers who break the bread and drink the cup of the Lord, there are many who have no intention of "showing forth his death," and washing themselves in the Blood of Atonement. I venture to hope that this is not our own case. I earnestly trust that you are found faithful in a faithless world, and diligent amidst a crowd of sleepers and idlers in the concerns of eternity. Christian brethren, with the volume of eternal truth in our hands, I am privileged, like the Prophet of old, to point to the rivers and valleys of the land of promise, and promise you the possession of them if only you will "go in to possess them" by the appointed way. Take for your encouragement his glowing words, "The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms" . . . . "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and . . . . the sword of thy excellency!"—I will not lessen the effects of these words by adding to them any thing of my own; but will conclude by saying, May the Lord bless them to your fainting souls! May you be "strong and of good courage!" May you "not be afraid, neither be dismayed! for," if a lowly and devout servant of the Cross, "thy God is with thee withersoever thou goest."

SERMON XVII.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.

REV. i. 7.

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.

Our Church, with parental solicitude for the welfare of her children, has, in the season which immediately precedes the birth of Christ, directed our notice to such topics as appear to be best calculated to dispose us to meet that season in a suitable frame of mind. Among these topics are the terrors of the Day of final Judgment. She rightly conceives, that none will be so desirous of seeking a Deliverer as those who have a just conception of the dangers to which they are exposed. Deeply impressed with the wisdom of this decision, and with a hope that in this instance, as in every other, the salutary fears which such a subject is calculated to awaken may conduct you ultimately to hope, and confidence, and joy, I shall endeavour to follow in the steps of the Church, and to call your attention to the several parts of the important text which I have now read to you.

This examination will lead us to the consideration of four distinct points.—

I. The DESCRIPTION OF THE JUDGE which is presented to us in the text.

II. The PERSONS WHO SHALL BE BROUGHT TO JUDGMENT.

III. One of the chief subjects of ALARM TO THE SINNER at that day.

IV. The FINAL CONSEQUENCES OF THIS JUDGMENT to the impenitent.

1. In the first place, we are to consider the DESCRIPTION OF THE JUDGE which is presented to us in the text.

The language employed by it is far too explicit to allow of any dispute as to the rank or authority of the Person who shall be the Judge. "Every eye," it is said, "shall see him, and they also *which pierced him;*" an expression applied also by the Prophet Zechariah to the Son of God. Indeed, if the text did not decide to whom the final judgment was to be committed, the point is left without doubt by numerous and unequivocal passages of Holy Writ. "The Son of Man," it is said, "shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him; and then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.... he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left."

But observe, also, the language in which his appearance for this final judgment is described in the text: "Behold, he cometh *with clouds*."—Need I say how closely this description harmonizes with those in which the appearance of the Supreme Being is constantly described in Scripture? When Jehovah, for example, was pursuing the Egyptians through the Red Sea, He is said to have thundered upon them from behind a "pillar of cloud." When He descended to converse with Moses on the Mount, He is said to have "called unto him out of the midst of the cloud." When He

came down to occupy the temple of Solomon, it is said that "a cloud filled the temple." His dwelling-place is called a "pavilion of clouds;" and the clouds are called the "dust of his feet." How evidently does such language conspire with the text to identify the rank and condition of the Father and the Son, and teach us the scriptural truth, that we are to "honour the Son *even as* we honour the Father!"

Behold, then, my brethren, the Glorious Being to whom the text, in common with every part of Scripture, assigns the office of the Judge of the world. When the sun and the stars shall fall from heaven, the moon be red as blood, the heavens be rolled up as a scroll, and "time shall be no longer," then the Son of Man, the despised and crucified Nazarene, shall "come in the clouds of heaven," in the glory of his Father, and, lighted to his prey by the fires of his own vengeance, shall proceed to vindicate his followers, and tread his enemies under foot. Once he came in fashion as a man, to die for us. Now he lives in heaven to intercede for us. At the last day he shall fill the great white throne; shall call the dead from every scattered grave in the universe, and proceed to that solemn adjudication which is to fix the destiny of its inhabitants for ever.—Consider, my brethren, the consequences which are involved in such a statement. Is the Son of God to be the Judge of the assembled world? Then our Judge is not a man, that he should be deceived, or be partial, or deviate from his predictions of wrath or of compassion, through any inability to fulfil them. Other judges cannot always detect crime, or always punish it. "God," in the language of the Wise Man, "shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."—But let us,

II. Secondly, consider TO WHAT CLASSES THE FINAL JUDGMENT WILL EXTEND. The language

of the text is most explicit on this subject: "*Every eye shall see him.*"

None, my brethren, not a single inhabitant of the world, shall be absent at that awful moment. All men shall then be contemporaries; and "*all* shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." Consider some of the various classes who, whether living at the moment, or summoned to judgment from the grave, shall in that hour obey the call of the Archangel, and stand for trial at the dread tribunal.—The poor blind Heathen shall come to judgment; though not, we may believe, to be tried by a law of which he is ignorant, but by the law of nature, written by the finger of God on his heart. The proud philosopher of Greece, or of modern lands and times, who has accounted the preaching of the Cross "foolishness," shall then be compelled to recognise the despised Saviour as the "wisdom" of God.—The stubborn and incredulous Jew shall come there, and in the Man of Nazareth discover "him of whom the Prophets spake," "the Son of the Highest," and "the Consolation of Israel." The man, master of all learning but that which will save the soul, shall come there, and learn that worldly wisdom is no sufficient substitute for that which cometh from God only. The illiterate shall there see his Judge, and learn that voluntary ignorance, far from being an excuse for crime, is the most deadly aggravation of it.—The rich of this world shall come, and discover, if they were before ignorant of it, that the riches of the one world, if wasted or abused, are the poverty of another.—The poor shall also come, and if rich in faith, shall learn that the beggar may be taken out of the dust to be seated amidst the principalities of heaven.—The mere formalist in religion shall come, and find too late that we may have "a name to live and be dead," and that obedience is better than all burnt sacrifice.—The man long possessed of the highest religious privileges shall come, and, if he has wasted these privileges, shall learn

that it is more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for the nations or individuals to whom the Gospel has been preached, among whom Christ has been "set forth crucified," in whose presence his mighty works, his miracles of power or grace have been wrought, without the soul being subdued to a state of penitence and love.—The saint also, and servant of the Lord, shall come, and stand astonished at his former doubts and misgivings; and learn that none ever hid their cares in a Saviour's bosom, and rested on his love, and laid hold by faith of the offers and promises of the Gospel, without finding at the day of account an Advocate anxious to plead, and all-powerful to deliver.—In short, "*every eye* shall see him." The scoffer, who has despised him, shall be compelled to see him in his glory. The man spiritually blind shall obtain his sight, to discover the glories of the heaven which he has lost, and the horrors of the region to which he is destined. The hard heart shall melt in the awful light of the Divine presence. The man who desired never to see Christ, shall see none but him. The man who longed after him, as the hart after the water-brooks, shall no longer see him through the veil of clouds, but "see as he is seen, and know as he is known." Multitudes, of whom we have never heard—nations, whose existence has not been discovered by the traveller—shall give up their dead, and all shall assemble before the Judge of the universe. It matters not that we now struggle against the conviction; it matters not that we now shrink from the adjudication; it matters not that we desire to appeal to some easier tribunal;—*this* judgment shall be set; the books of the Lord shall be opened; and he himself descend to discriminate between the evil and the good, and to appoint their lot for ever.

III. But let us proceed, thirdly, to consider ONE OF THE CHIEF SUBJECTS OF ALARM TO THE SIN-

NER ON THAT GREAT DAY OF ACCOUNT. It is said in the text, "*they* also" shall see him "*which pierced him.*"

Doubtless, my brethren, at that hour, sin of every description, which is not cleansed by the Blood of Atonement, will be a grievous and intolerable burden to the transgressor. It will in that awful crisis be a subject of deep lamentation, that we should in the slightest degree have injured one another. Then, the unkind intention, word, or deed, will be no light matter. Trifles will swell into offences of tremendous magnitude, when viewed in the light of the Throne of Judgment, and contrasted with the purity of the Presence in which we stand. Every act of injustice, of falsehood, or of that species of evasion which is but falsehood in a subtler form; of tyranny, or of exaction; every attempt to build up our own interest on the ruin of others;—each of these offences, if not washed by the tears of contrition, and the Blood of the great Sacrifice, will arise to hasten the conviction of the offender, and deepen the horrors of his sentence.—And there are some circumstances, which, as they will serve to invest our sins with new terrors in that awful moment, it may be well to notice.

In the first place, every sin will be then seen with all the *consequences* which it has produced.—In this world, our sin seems often to stand as an offence by itself, and not to be followed by other sins or evils to which it has given birth. But *then*, every transgression will be seen, not alone, but with all its fruits; as the seed of many sins in ourselves and others; as the first perhaps in an immeasurable series of evils, of which it is the source and progenitor.

In the next place, the impenitent sinner will then be compelled to recognise, not merely the sins of his *life*, but the far larger catalogue of the *sins of his heart.*—He shall see every crooked design, every base passion, every bad temper, every motion of envy, jealousy,

vanity, or worldliness, which had hitherto been locked up in the soul. These shall be written as with a sunbeam on the wall of judgment, and proclaimed with the voice of the Archangel, and the trump of God.

At that dreadful hour, also, we shall be made to contemplate, not merely every *companion of our sin*, but every human being on whom our sins have exercised a mischievous influence, have seduced from the path of duty, or confirmed in the habits of transgression. We shall see the *child*, around whose neck, by neglect, we have hung the millstone of impenitence; the *poor* man, whom we have refused to instruct; the *wretched Heathen*, to whom we have wilfully denied a teacher or a Bible, and have left without God in the world. In short, every soul, whom our inconsistency, coldness, or worldliness, have either impelled or retained in the course which led to perdition, shall then arise as a swift and terrible witness against us.

At that day, also, our sins shall *not present themselves alone*.—Here, perhaps, they display themselves to the eye of the examiner, *one by one;* the sins of youth not ordinarily taking part to condemn us with the sins of age; the remembrance of the one transgression passing away before the commission of another. But, at the bar of God, our sins will arise, as it were, in a body, and, with an agreeing and concurring voice, demand our everlasting destruction.

But even these circumstances, my brethren, shall not be those of most oppressive weight to the impenitent offender in that day. Sinners are described in the text, as looking on "Him whom *they have pierced*." They shall discover in their Judge, the Saviour whom their own offences had assisted, in the first instance, to carry to the cross; and afterwards, from day to day, to "crucify afresh." It is true, that the sinner has injured his fellow-creature; but shall that offence be compared with acts of rebellion against the Son of God? It is true, that he may have injured those who have never

injured him; but what is this, in comparison of acts of ingratitude against Him who "loved us, and washed us in his own blood?" Other spectacles of transgression they might be able to endure; but to see in their Judge their crucified Lord—that forehead once mangled with thorns, that side once rent with the spear, those hands and feet once torn by the nails—and these wounds inflicted by themselves; this will be indeed an aggravation of horrors. When the crucifixion of the Prince of Glory is regarded as an event at the distance of eighteen hundred years, the spectacle is softened by the series of events and intervening circumstances through which we contemplate it. But when we shall see him, not at a distance, but face to face; not as man, but as God; not on the cross of his humiliation, but on the throne of his glory; our offence shall assume its proper character, and overwhelm the impenitent with horror and dismay. At that instant, how precious would be the opportunity of repentance! But it will be passed for ever! The Saviour will not then appear to "give repentance;" to plead for mercy; to cleanse us by his blood; to sanctify us by his grace. The sinner will, as it is said, "mourn apart;" friendless amidst an assembled universe; unable to avert the judgment, to mitigate the punishment, or to soften the Judge.

IV. But we have yet to notice, in the fourth and last place, the CONSEQUENCES OF THIS FINAL JUDGMENT TO THE IMPENITENT SINNER.

It is said in the text, "all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." In other words, wherever there is an impenitent sinner, the deepest anguish will rend his soul, and prepare him for the world of horrors which he is about to enter. All who have neglected the Saviour; all who have obeyed man rather than God; all who have refused the offers of grace; all who have not loved him that has so tenderly loved them;—all these shall "wail" and lament because of their injured

and angry Lord. Then, as it has been powerfully said by a distinguished Bishop of our Church, "Those which are alive in nature, but dead in fear, shall be forced from the rocks where they had fled to hide themselves, and from the caverns where they would fain have been concealed .... because their retirements are dismantled, and their rocks are broken into wider ruptures, and admit a strange light into their secret bowels; and men, being forced abroad into the theatre of mighty horrors, shall run up and down distracted." Deep, indeed, my brethren, too deep to be contemplated without horror of soul, are the terrors of a day when the general sentence will be passed, and the destiny of myriads fixed for ever. I cannot wish to dwell upon such a scene, and will therefore conclude, by stating one or two observations necessary to complete our views of this subject.

1. In the first place, if the statement of the text is true—if judgment is only deferred; if this day of fatal account is pressing upon every one of us; if the incidents of every moment are conducting us to it; if all the power of earth and hell confederate cannot delay it for an instant; if each one of us might be in an instant summoned to the awful bar—then, what madness it is to be trifling with these things; delaying, for an hour, what is to decide upon our happiness or misery for eternity! Away, therefore, my brethren, with inferior considerations; with petty disputes, and refinements, and objections. *Are we ready for eternity?* Is the great account made up? Have we "repented" of our sins? Are we "converted" to God? Have we fled for refuge to the Cross of Christ?—You who value your souls; you who shrink from the wrath of the Great King; you who consider these things, not as the fictions of the preacher, but the verities of Heaven, "awake," and "arise," that "Christ may give you light." Rehearse, even to-day, the scene of the final judgment. Place yourselves at that dreadful bar, and

ask whether your sins are pardoned; whether you are accepted of the Lord; and whether you are "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

2. Secondly, and lastly, let me remind you, my Christian brethren, that, terrible as is the scene delineated in the text, it has no terrors for the real penitent and believer in Christ. What sentences are those: "The blood of Christ.... cleanseth from all sin;" "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ!" What can the heart need more? Here the Judge is the instructer; and he teaches you the all-sufficient plea of every lost sinner; and supplies you with that shield by which every arrow of wrath may be repelled. You, also, the contrite servants of the Lord, shall "look on him whom you have pierced." But the wounds, so terrible to others, shall to you be signs of reconciliation, and love, and everlasting compassion. Fear nothing, then, ye doubting and timid servants of the Cross. If we know you not, God knows you. The wounds of the Saviour are the marks of the conflict he has fought for you. They assure you, that the Seed of the woman has bruised the serpent's head. They authorize you to hope against hope; to cast all your cares upon God; and, even amidst the wreck of elements and crash of worlds, to lift up your heads with joy, because your redemption draweth nigh.—Oh, may God multiply the number of such penitents and believers among us! May God strengthen, stablish, and settle you! May you "overcome, and sit down in the kingdom of God!"

SERMON XVIII.

NEGLIGENCE OF RELIGION.

HEB. ii. 3.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?

In this solemn and affecting question of the Apostle, the word "salvation" is put generally for the whole of the Gospel: and the Gospel is so called, because it is the means by which salvation is both offered and secured to the soul of the contrite believer in Christ. Various modes of religion have been distinguished by various characteristics—some by their pomp, some by their licentiousness, and some by their cruelty. The Jewish religion was marked at once by its detestation of sin, and the awful penalties which it denounced against the impenitent offender. The Gospel is not less distinguished by its hatred of sin; but it is peculiarly marked by the large, free, and consolatory terms on which it offers "salvation;" by the urgency with which it presses the acceptance of these terms; by its promise of the assistance of the Holy Spirit; by the perfect provision, in short, which it makes for the present rescue and eternal happiness of all who receive it. The title, therefore—the characteristic, the distinguishing feature—of the religion of Christ, is "salvation." And so forcibly is this conception of its character impressed upon the mind of the Apostle, that, in the text,

he treats the two terms as identical; and instead of asking, "How shall we escape if we neglect the Gospel?" he asks, "How shall we escape, if we neglect this great salvation?" It is my wish, in humble dependence upon the Divine blessing, to consider the various topics to which this solemn and emphatical inquiry naturally leads our attention; and with this view to inquire,

I. Why the SALVATION here referred to is called a "GREAT SALVATION;"

II. What it is TO NEGLECT this great salvation; and,

III. Why the DIFFICULTY OF ESCAPE is represented as so great, in the case of those who are guilty of this negligence.

I. In the first place, then, we are to inquire WHY THE SALVATION OF THE GOSPEL IS DESCRIBED IN THE TEXT AS A "GREAT SALVATION."

1. In the first place, the salvation of the Gospel is "great," if we consider the many distinctions by which its approach and promulgation were accompanied.

Consider, for instance, the series of *prophecies* by which the coming of the Saviour was announced,—prophecies extending through such a succession of ages, employing the minds of so many individuals in such different parts of the world,—prophecies so minute, extensive, and complete, as to wear the aspect rather of history than of prediction.

Consider, in like manner, the *miracles* which ushered in the religion, and accompanied it through every step of its progress—miracles which I may say blazed around it like a glory from heaven, at once proclaiming its high origin, and ensuring its ultimate establishment. Such circumstances, with others of a similar nature, lend a greatness altogether peculiar to that system of religion which Chri t introduced into the world.

Again: the term "great" may be used with refer-

ence to the *mysteries* connected with the Gospel. What astonishing mysteries, for instance, are the incarnation of the Son of God, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer, the fellowship of the Christian with his Maker and his God! "Without controversy," says the Apostle, "great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Again: this salvation is "great," if we consider the *extent of the misery from which it rescues the penitent sinner.* The man delivered by the Gospel, is not rescued merely from death, or merely from annihilation, or merely from the agony of the body, or temporary agony of the soul. He is saved from the "worm that never dies," and the "fire that is not quenched;" from a worm and from a fire which, whatever be their precise nature, are described as wasting without destroying; as tormenting the immortal man, without extinguishing life or the capacity of suffering. He is snatched from the wrath of God—of God not, as here, in judgment remembering mercy; but exerting his infinite power simply and exclusively to punish and afflict the offender. Well may a deliverance from such miseries be denominated "great!"

Again: this salvation is "great," if we consider the *extent of the actual benefit it confers.* That benefit includes, not merely an emancipation from all evil, but an introduction to all good—to good unlike that of the present state, where every thing that is pure is soiled with impurity, every thing bright shaded with darkness, and where evil constantly struggles with good, and too often overcomes it. The good of heaven is good without any mixture of evil. Search, my brethren, if your heart is slow to discover the greatness of this salvation—search into the Sacred Record, and observe the picture there displayed to us of the joys of our Father's kingdom—of that temple of which God is

the light and the glory. There, it is said, the delighted worshippers "see His face;" and His "Name shall be on their foreheads;" "and they shall reign for ever and ever:" "They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple ... and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them:" "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity:" "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." But why should I multiply quotations with which I should hope every mind is familiar? Can any man have caught the faintest glimpse of the splendours and joys of the world of spirits, and not acknowledge the "greatness" of that scheme of salvation by which the portals of that world are thrown open, and a way of approach provided to the water of life, and the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God?

Again: this salvation is "great," because it is *unchangeable*. This, my brethren, constitutes the grand drawback on all earthly happiness, that it carries along with it the seeds of its own dissolution—that its maturity is soon reached; and then decay seizes the root, and withers the head, and lays its glories in the dust. How many a proud fabric of hope or joy is in an instant cast to the ground! How many pangs inflicted too deep for any hand but that of the Great Physician to heal! How many a frail bark driven out into the great ocean of life, the sails rent, the rudder broken, the earthly pilot gone, and no compass left, but wretchedness and despair! But salvation knows nothing of this change or decay. It connects us with an unchangeable God. It secures to us an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Astonishing contemplation! Since the days of that holy man who "walked with God," and "was not, because God took him," thousands of years have elapsed—the Lord has swept the earth with his hurricane; has broken up the fountains of the great deep;

has destroyed the whole world, with the exception of eight souls; has changed the very map of the universe: but the joys of that servant of God have suffered no eclipse or decay, and are at this instant as bright, as fresh, as young as ever. They are unchangeable as their great Author. How "great," then, is a "salvation" which stamps the seal of permanence on all our future possessions, and gives to those glorious realities an endurance fixed and certain as the nature and existence of God himself!

But, finally, this "salvation" is "great," if we consider who is *the glorious Author and Finisher of it.* Hear the Scriptures: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law:" "He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him:" "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And what, my brethren, can invest any work or dispensation with vastness and glory, if its connexion with such an Author and Dispenser does not? This salvation was bought by the blood of the Son of God. It is the fruit of his agony and bloody sweat; of his death and burial; of his cross and passion; of his glorious resurrection and ascension. It is derived, not merely from the agency of angels, but from the sufferings of the Lord of angels and of men. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." The powers and principalities of heaven, as they gazed on the throne of the Ancient of Days, saw that Son, who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," clothe himself in the infirmities of sinful man, and descend from heaven to earth, to accomplish this salvation, and lead the heirs of it to life and everlasting glory. And, now that he has ascended on high, it is to intercede for them; to bestow on them the joys of redemption, and give them on earth a foretaste of the happiness they shall possess for ever. What is great, my brethren, if such a salva-

tion is not? What is worthy to be compared with joys so purchased, so communicated, so perpetuated to the soul of the real penitent and believer?

II. But I come now, secondly, to consider WHAT IS MEANT BY NEGLECTING THIS GREAT SALVATION.

In so doing, it is not my intention to dwell upon the case of the avowed enemies of religion. The offence of such individuals is not so much that of negligence, as of opposition, insult, and rebellion against the just and holy authority of the Lord their God. In their present circumstances they must be considered as in arms against God, and as having God in arms against them. To them, therefore, I would suggest only the single question with which the word of God supplies us: "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"—But let us pass on to consider, next, the class of persons more especially described by the words of the text.

Those, then, may surely be said to neglect this great salvation *who slumber over their immortal interests*—who, so that they are guilty of no violent offence against the Gospel, are satisfied to be indifferent to it. Great benefits, my Christian brethren, upon every principle of equity, deserve great and anxious labours and struggles to possess ourselves of them: "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure"—"Strive (or agonize) to enter in at the strait gate."

Those, again, may surely be said to neglect this great salvation, who are *merely neutrals* in the cause of God. The language of God himself is, "He that is not with me, is against me"—"I would thou wert either cold or hot"—"Why halt ye between two opinions?"

Those, also, may be said to "neglect" it, who fail to make it their *first and greatest concern.* The language of our Father in heaven is, "My son, give me

thine heart"—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart."

Those, again, "neglect" it, who do not *use the means appointed by God himself for obtaining it.* Surely, my brethren, where so large a bounty has been bestowed, the Glorious Giver has a right to determine the means by which it shall be secured. Has He said, therefore, "By grace ye are saved?"—it must be an indispensable duty earnestly and devoutly to seek that grace. Has He said that Christ is the "Author and Finisher of" the "faith" by which we are saved? then must this "faith" be anxiously sought at the hands of your Redeemer. Has He proclaimed, that all these blessings shall be granted to prayer; that "whatsoever we shall ask" in the name of Christ, "shall be done unto" us?—then, prayer, fervent, devout, believing, indefatigable prayer—prayer such as is suited to the creature who has nothing, when approaching to the Being who possesses every thing, and is willing to give every thing to the real supplicant—prayer in public and private; prayer in our families, in our closets, and in the great congregation—must be the plain, positive, imperious duty of every candidate for this great salvation. Has God, in like manner, called upon us for the *use of other means* of grace—for the study of the sacred Scriptures; for the solemn and careful use of the sacraments; for devout meditation; for tender and affectionate communion with His true servants?—then a neglect of any of these means; a mode of life which excludes them; habits of amusement, or trifling, or self-indulgence, which weaken the impression of divine things, which destroy our commerce with God, which chill the ardour of devotion, which fasten us to the world, and detach us from God; must be accounted a neglect of this salvation, a contempt of those privileges which are the real consolations of this world, and the best triumphs of another.

III. But it is now time that I should consider, thirdly, WHY THE NEGLECT OF THIS SALVATION IS TREATED OF IN THE TEXT AS SO OFFENSIVE TO GOD, AND FATAL TO OUR REAL INTERESTS. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

The question of the Apostle is, in this place, more emphatical than any declaration on the subject could have been; "How shall we escape?" How is deliverance possible? How can any hope of salvation be indulged under such circumstances?—I will name but two reasons for the difficulty of escape in the case of such offenders.

1. In the first place, such neglect amounts, as we have now seen, to *a rejection of the very choicest gifts of God.*—Some of the other bounties of Heaven itself appear in a sense to partake of the imperfection of the world in which they are bestowed upon us. Health, riches, and even that best of all earthly possessions, the tender love of those whom we tenderly love, by alluring the soul from higher objects, often become questionable possessions in this fallen state. But, my brethren, consider the salvation of the Gospel in its just character, and how inestimable are the privileges it conveys to us! What stronger evidence of love could we demand? What, I might almost ask, could Infinite Power do more to convince us of the compassion of the Master to whom we have committed our souls? "How, then, shall we escape," if we despise this choicest gift; trample upon this best jewel of the heavenly treasury; and, when the Son of God descends to meet us, turn from him, to pursue the follies and interests of a fleeting world?

2. But a second source of danger in neglecting this great salvation is, that it is, in fact, the *last remedy proposed for the deliverance of the world.* It is the last effort of Omnipotence for our safety. If we receive from the Gospel no pardon of sins, no change and

sanctification of heart, no title to glory, ours must be a lost case; "The summer is past, the harvest is ended, and we are not saved." Oh! may this consideration assist to rouse every one of us to a lively feeling of the perils of a spirit of levity and indecision in religion! Where can we fly for refuge, if the strong hold of the Gospel is neglected? Have we another Saviour? Is there another atonement offered for sin? Have we another Advocate with the Father? Were we to be at this moment summoned to the bar of Heaven, would a single voice from the world of innumerable spirits plead for the impenitent sinner?—and if it pleaded, could it be heard? How, then, shall you escape, if you neglect this great salvation—this means of grace—this hope of glory, the mediation, the sacrifice, the intercession of the eternal Son of God? "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "No other name under heaven is given." *You*, if an impenitent sinner, quit the "Foundation;" you despise the "Name"—where, then, is your hope of safety?

But, my brethren, I could wish, in conclusion, to make a suitable application of the subject before us, to several distinct classes of society.

1. And, in the first place, I may be permitted to address myself to those who, without any decided opposition to religion, are yet content to *trifle* with that which ought to be the first and most serious concern of every reasonable mind.—Let me beg such persons to consider against whom the threat contained in the text is denounced. Is it against the avowed enemies of "salvation;" against the licentious, the dishonest, the blasphemous, or, in any way, the gross and profligate offender? Doubtless their case is included in this, or, at least, in many other denunciations; but the question of the text directly affects a distinct class of individuals,—I mean, *the negligent*: "How shall

we escape, if we *neglect* so great salvation?" Surely, then, the just inference from this language is, that although we present a fair aspect to the world; although we are moral and benevolent; although we neither oppose any man's progress in religion, nor wound his feelings; yet, if we are cold, indolent, or indifferent in the things of God, we are for the present "aliens from the commonwealth" of Christ, and "strangers to the covenants of promise." O make haste to quit the border-country you have been hitherto occupying. March no longer under a doubtful banner; but, faithful to your baptismal engagement, go forth in the name and in the power of the Lord, and prove yourselves the "good soldiers" of Jesus Christ.

2. In the second place, I would apply the text to the case of individuals who, without either a decided rejection or neglect of religion, have *adopted a very low and inadequate conception of its object and character.*—Large, it is to be feared, is the number of persons who, with a scanty and lukewarm attention to the outward offices of religion, combine tempers and habits altogether opposed to its high and holy character. Such individuals I would entreat to take notice of the single term by which religion is characterized in the text, "Salvation." If, therefore, our religion falls short of accomplishing that end; if it does not carry us to the Author of "eternal salvation" for pardon and grace; if it does not bring us into a "state of salvation" here, and qualify us for its pure, lofty, and astonishing enjoyments in the world of spirits; if it leaves us sordid, selfish, impure, or earthly-minded, instead of imparting to us the stamp and character of the children of God—it is not the religion of the Gospel; not a religion which will satisfy the Almighty, or which therefore ought to satisfy us. Monstrous indeed is the delusion, which leads any man to believe that the Son of God endured the shame and agony of the cross to establish and perpetuate a faith which, although it may constrain a man

to a few dull acts of outward devotion, leaves him the sport of his passions, the slave of the world, and a child of the devil.

3. Finally, I must address myself to those who, far from falling into either of the faults to which I have referred, entertain so high a conception of the duties connected with religion, and so strong a sense of the inadequacy with which they have hitherto fulfilled these duties, that they cannot persuade themselves the privileges and joys of this "salvation" will ever be granted to themselves. Such individuals, also, I must remind of another expression in the text. The salvation of the Gospel is here called a "*great*" salvation. And I may venture to say, it is so called, partly with a view to the consideration of such persons as yourselves. The deliverance, my brethren, of which you are in search, is "great," not only in the extent of the benefit it confers, but as respects the number for whom it is intended. Listen to the language of the spirits of the just made perfect: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of *every* kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." It is not, therefore, a salvation confined to a corner of creation, or reserved for only a small part of the family of God, but is extended to every point of the compass; and men of all conditions, and ranks, and complexions, shall be embraced in it. The one essential and all-sufficient requisite of salvation, is a lowly, contrite, affectionate reception of the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour and a Guide.—You are not, you say, what you could wish to be. But what servant of God will hold a different language with regard to his own state—will venture to present a single act of his own life to God, and challenge for it the Divine scrutiny and approbation? Which of the happy spirits seen by St. John in the region of glory, was not disposed to cast his crown before the throne of God and the Lamb, and ascribe his salvation to the "blood which cleanseth from all sin?" Let me, then, earnestly

call upon you to approach God through the merits of a crucified Saviour. And, as the text asks, "How shall we *escape*, if we neglect so great salvation?" I may venture to ask, "How can we *perish*, if we humbly and devoutly seek that salvation?" Whom will the Saviour cast out, that, in the feeling of total unworthiness and helplessness, comes to him, and lays hold of the hem of his garment? If such are your circumstances—if, with such emptiness of pretension and simplicity of faith, you cast yourselves on the compassion of your Redeemer—*that salvation is yours;* —yours by promise—yours by inheritance—yours by the purchase of a Saviour's blood—yours by the unchangeable covenant of an unchangeable God. Live, then, in peace, my Christian brethren, if only you are living at the foot of a Redeemer's cross. Guard, in every stage of religion, against the slightest approaches to negligence or supineness. Remember the vigilance of your great adversary, and meet it with corresponding vigilance. Love, and trust, and watch, and pray; and then shall you be of the number privileged to say, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth:" .... "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines .... yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

SERMON XIX.

CHRISTIAN MEMBERSHIP.

EPH. iv. 25.

We are members one of another.

If an angel were to be suddenly introduced into the world which we inhabit, what is the conception which he would be likely to form of the circumstances and mutual connexion of those who dwell on its surface? Carry him, for example, into the prisons of the Inquisition, and show him one fallen creature torturing another for some slight deviation from his own opinions in religion. Or carry him to the hold of a slave-ship, and show him one human being stowing other human beings into a dark, fœtid, pestilential hole, for the purposes of commercial speculation.—Carry him even into private families, and show him the scenes of irritation and bitterness which too often interrupt the harmony and love which ought to characterize the professed followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. Show him scenes and circumstances such as these, and what would be the inference to which he would be almost necessarily led by the contemplation of them? Must it not be, that he had descended upon a world where the inhabitants, instead of being designed as instruments of usefulness and happiness to each other, were the intended instruments of each other's misery and

ruin? But how different, my brethren, is the fact! The end for which mankind are really designed, can be determined only by a reference to the will of their Maker. And how distinctly is that will stated in the sacred Scriptures! To name no other passage, how powerful is the image employed in the text! We are there represented, not simply as distinct bodies having a strong claim to dependence one on the other, but as the different "members" or limbs of the same body. Christ is the head, we are the "members." It is not more monstrous, therefore, in the sight of God and of his angels, that one limb of the body should erect itself in hostility against another, than that one man should be found in a state of enmity and opposition to the other.

It is on this view of the circumstances of man, my Christian brethren, that I propose on the present occasion to dwell; and may the God of mercy be pleased to bless our inquiries!

In pursuing this examination, it is my wish to notice,

I. THE SOURCE OF THAT MEMBERSHIP OF WHICH THE TEXT SPEAKS.

II. SOME OF THE DUTIES WHICH ARISE OUT OF IT.

I. In the first place, we are to notice THE SOURCE OF THAT MEMBERSHIP OF WHICH THE TEXT SPEAKS.

1. And here, first, "we are members one of another," as *being the children of a common parent.*—"Doubtless," exclaims the outcast family of Gentiles, "Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." It is difficult for members of the same earthly family to forget their relationship to a common father. In most instances, they occupy nearly the same level in society; they speak a common language; they bear, perhaps, a close

family resemblance; they have a thousand common interests, tastes, and pursuits. But the remembrance of our relationship to mankind at large is not so easily retained. In this case, distance, the division of interests, a difference of language, feature, complexion, interrupt the feelings of sympathy and brotherhood. Nevertheless, my Christian brethren, this relationship also is to be recognised and felt. You acknowledge the bonds of brotherhood as the children of an earthly parent. You consider such a relationship as a decisive motive for kindness, and an invincible objection to unkindness. Behold, then, in every man a brother. The savage shivering at the pole, or burning at the line, is bound to you by ties that ought never to be broken. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."

2. A second source of this membership is *the dependence of one man upon another*.—Of all animals, it is probable that man is the most dependent upon his own species. The lion of the forest and the herd of the stall are nursed up to maturity with very little aid from creatures of their own kind; and after a short time, every creature, but man, casts off its young, and leaves them to their own resources. But, in every stage of human existence, man is made to feel his absolute need of man. From the infant in arms to the man in a state of second infancy, through all the stages of our varied life, every one wants his brother. The young need to be taught by the wisdom of age, and the old to be sustained by the vigour of youth. The strong in mind need the strong in body; the rich, the poor; and the poor, the rich. The barrenness of one country is supplied by the superfluities of another.—The individual who thinks that he can dissolve this membership, and that he can live on in surly independence of his brother, soon finds that he has few comforts, and many wants; that his strength is, after all, in union; and that to be alone, is in a sense to be

miserable. It is declared of the tenderest of all unions, "God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him." And next to the joy which springs from union with God himself, is that which arises from the intimate blending of soul with soul in the service of the Lord, and in the service of one another. "Now," says the Apostle, of the whole race of mankind, "are they many members, yet but one body, and the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you:" "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

3. A third source of this membership is supplied by our common *nature, trials, and dangers.*—Behold the great family of man, by whom you are surrounded. You are heirs to the same infirmities. The same blood circles in your veins: the same machinery impels it into action. The same wind warms and chills you; fills you with disease, or releases you from its grasp. The same appetites rage in the system: the same passions knock at the heart. "The flesh," in every man, "lusteth against the spirit." Corruption is the natural inheritance of every child of Adam: as it is said, "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."—In like manner, the dangers and trials of men are the same. That world, my brethren, which is a snare to you, is a snare to me: that great enemy, the devil, is our common enemy: those temptations, which have robbed you of your birthright and privileges, your spiritual relationship to God, your hopes of heaven, and your fitness for it, have inflicted the same evils upon every man; and each and all of us stand, till washed by the blood of Christ and sanctified by his Spirit, the miserable objects of the displeasure of an insulted God. What a bond of union, my Christian brethren, is supplied by this consideration! We have a deep interest in the man who has fought with

us in the same battle; has been wounded by the same weapon; has been chained in the same dungeon. But, my brethren, your fellow-creature, be he whom he may —prosperous or poor, honoured or dishonoured, ignorant or learned, attractive or unattractive—is a person who has fought on the same field with yourself, and has been exposed to the same enemy. The same infirmities harass him; the same corruptions beset him; the same tempter from hour to hour assails him. Can we fail to sympathize in circumstances so entirely our own?

4. The last source of membership to which I shall refer, is that of *our dependence upon the mercies of the same God and Saviour.*—In those who, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, have availed themselves of the compassionate offers of the Gospel; have sought to be washed in the Blood of Atonement, and sanctified by the Spirit of God; there is a double bond of union. They are, as it were, twice born of the same Parent; are "born, not of blood ....nor of the will of man.... but of God;" and are, through this new and spiritual birth, united by the most intimate of all bonds,—the bond, I may say, which unites the spirits in glory to God and to one another. But I am here more especially speaking of those common bonds of union which bind together all the scattered creatures of God. And such a bond is our common dependence upon the mercy of God in Christ. If, my brethren, we are interested in the individual who has suffered with us, that interest is much deepened if the same individual has also escaped with us. And such are the precise circumstances of all the creatures of God. We are wrecked by the same storm of sin; and, if saved at all, we must be saved by the same Redeemer; for "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." That beggar in your path is as free to avail himself of the atonement of Christ, or the agency of his Spirit, as yourself. That

monarch on his throne must flee to the same Refuge, or be cast out for ever. Not a spirit of the just shall enter the house of many mansions, except through the intercession of the same Redeemer. Are not circumstances such as these, my Christian brethren, a link of intimate union among the creatures of God? Must not the heart be dead indeed, which is insensible to them? And can the man who looks at them in their just light, fail to say, "We are members one of another;" we are united by the dying hand of a crucified Redeemer; and what "God hath joined together," let not man, nor "death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," put asunder.

But, my brethren, let us now endeavour,

II. Secondly, to consider SOME OF THE DUTIES WHICH ARISE OUT OF THE MEMBERSHIP WHICH IS SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT.

1. The first duty I would point out, is that of *cordial union for the service of our common God and Saviour.*—If we are the members, and Christ is the Head; if we are the children, and God is the tender and affectionate Father; then no obligation can be plainer and stronger than that of a hearty and affectionate devotion of ourselves to Him, who thus binds us to himself and to one another. There is a common error in society, which this consideration may enable us to expose. If a man is just, and generous, and kind—if, as a soldier, he puts himself in the van of the battle; or, as a citizen, he shrinks from the slightest approaches to dishonesty—even though such a man should be negligent of God and of his Redeemer, the applauses of the world will follow him, and the sentence which pronounced such an individual to be defective in some of the main qualities of a good man would be deemed fanatical and severe. But let us take a parallel case. Suppose

the same individual, endowed, generally speaking, with these amiable and attractive qualities, to have the one solitary defect of ingratitude or indifference to a most kind and tender parent, what would be your judgment of his character and pretensions? Would you not say at once, "No number of excellencies can cancel such a defect?" And who must not concur in the equity of this decision? But, if so, then I ask for the same justice to the Great Father of the universe, which you are thus ready to yield to his creatures. Be the attractions of the man without religion what they will, he has the one capital and overwhelming defect,—the defect of ingratitude and negligence to the kindest and tenderest of Parents: he pays back love with indifference, mercy with rebellion, and the death of the Redeemer by a life of transgression and impurity. Far, far from us, my brethren, be such an offence. "We are members one of another." God has united us in one family. Let us serve him and love him with all our heart.

Nor am I here simply asking for the service of God, but for a *concurrent and united service*.—Nothing, as it appears to me, can place in a more objectionable point of view the evil of a controversial, bitter, intolerant, or even seceding spirit in religion, than the subject now before us. I am not censuring the individual, who, after deep deliberation, and inquiry, and prayer, openly professes that difference of opinion upon material points in faith and practice which he continues to feel. Far be it from us to fulminate sentences of condemnation against each other, and especially on the grounds of the difference in our theological opinions. But, my brethren, need I maintain, that our common Father must delight to see a spirit of unity among his children, and must be offended with a spirit of distraction and disorder? And who must not be grieved by seeing the Church of the Redeemer a mere rope of sand, without continuity of parts or principle of union?

Why should the seamless coat of Christ be rent by needless and wanton divisions? Why should men, on account of a few points of difference, which they themselves often admit to be trifles, break the golden band which should bind the children of one family to God and to one another!

2. A second duty, which arises out of our state of membership, is *that of pity and forbearance towards all those who offend.*—It is impossible for me wholly to pass over the notice of this duty, lest any thing which has been said should be construed into a declaration of war, or intolerance, against the infirmities or errors of others. How lovely is that counsel of the Apostle: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted!" How defective is the conduct of multitudes upon this very point! We speak indeed of men as fallen creatures; but, when we come to act with them, we expect them to be angels.—My Christian brethren, every man who has to deal with you or me, has to deal with a poor weak creature; and every man with whom we have to deal, is also a weak and fallen creature. Pity and forbearance are essential on every side. Could the temper of mind which magnifies trifles into mountains, makes a man an offender for a word, puts a bad construction upon an action which admits of a good one; could such a temper of mind find its way, as it never shall, into heaven, it might be exercised, among the undefiled and sinless inhabitants of that pure and happy region, without perhaps any mischievous consequences;—but in a world such as ours of infirmity and guilt, such a spirit carries along with it the virus of bitterness and calamity, and scatters a moral plague over every spot that it occupies. "We are members one of another:" we must therefore "love as brethren; be pitiful, be courteous." We must "see that we fall not out by the way." We must "forgive," as

we hope to "be forgiven." The daily and hourly dependents upon the free compassion of God, must be ready to show the compassion which they seek. We must reflect upon earth the image of the compassionate Saviour we profess to love, and distribute the mercies which flow in so full a tide to ourselves, by a thousand streams over all the wide and desert face of society.

3. Lastly, as members of Christ, *we are bound to yield the most active assistance to all the members of his great family.*—I have as yet spoken only of the negative duty, of doing nothing wrong to others. I come now to the positive duty, of doing them good.

And here, my brethren, a double duty evidently opens upon us.—We must endeavour, in the first place, to benefit their *bodies*. That is, indeed, an over-refined and highly enthusiastic creed, which persuades a man to neglect the body of others, out of zeal to rescue their souls. How many of the miracles of the Old and New Testament were wrought for the relief of the body! How urgently does our Lord insist, in his account of the Last Day, upon the duty of clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, and visiting the poor prisoner! How entirely does he identify their case with his own! "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

And, my brethren, if this attention to the bodies of men is a necessary duty, much more is a spirit of cordial and affectionate attention to their *souls*. You would not preserve the rind, and throw away the fruit; you would not save the scaffolding, and destroy the edifice; you would not take care of the casket, and trample the precious jewel under foot; you would not preserve the mansion from the flames, and leave the inhabitants to destruction. How is it, then, that men of reason; men who value themselves upon their nice distinctions as to the real value of things; can allow themselves, while they take care of the perishing body, to neglect the immortal soul; to conduct a poor crea-

ture to the very edge of the grave in safety and comfort, and then dismiss him, unwarned and unprepared, to the terrors of the great day?

And here, my brethren, I close this imperfect examination of the important principle laid down in the text. But I will not do so without expressing an anxious and cordial desire that we, as individuals, shall not be satisfied with a mere dry assent to the value of the text, or without an honest endeavour, in dependence on the strength of God, to bring it to bear upon our own circumstances. Ye are "members one of another." Live, then, and love as brethren. Let the house and family of God no longer be disturbed by the clamours of controversy and faction. Let no discordant voice be heard among those who are mustered under the same holy banner. Let the temper of the church reflect "the mind" of the Master we profess to serve. Instead of, in the too general spirit of the world, searching out causes of division and matter of conflict, let our petty differences be all sacrificed on the altar of the God of love. As a parent, you are cut to the heart by the appearances of discord among the members of your family; and you tell them, that an essential evidence of love to yourself is the ardent love of one another. As members, then, of the great family of God, deny not to the tenderest of all parents that harmony upon which he also insists among his children. "Let brotherly love continue." Love not merely "in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth." "Love one another with a pure heart fervently." There comes a moment, my Christian brethren, as it has been said, when "a few words spoken in charity" will be of more value than whole volumes of angry disputation. Strive to live at all times, as though that moment were already arrived. Strive to anticipate the happiness of heaven, by breathing the spirit, and speaking the language, and discharging the offices of its united and rejoicing inhabitants.

SERMON XX.

SPIRITUAL DEATH.

EPH. ii. 1.

Dead in trespasses and sins.

NEITHER language nor fancy can present the consequences of sin under a more appalling aspect than the single word and image by which they are displayed in the text. The whole race of mankind, in their natural and unconverted state—these fair, active, and intelligent creatures—are here represented as dead; "*dead* in trespasses and sins." Much of the beauty we behold is not real beauty; the activity is not real activity; the intelligence not real intelligence: They have "a name" to live, "but are dead." They are like corpses put into action by some medical process, but which have no real life: "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Solemn indeed is the picture which is thus presented to the mind; and God grant that the mere display of it on the present occasion may produce a due impression upon our souls.

But, my Christian brethren, in proportion to the significance and solemnity of the image thus employed to describe the consequences of sin, is the importance of contemplating it in a just point of view. Nor are the errors connected with this subject by any means few or insignificant. The error of some, is that of so weakening the figure as to deprive spiritual death of all analogy to bodily death; and thus robbing the image

of all its force and solemnity. The error of others, on the contrary, is that of conceiving, that, because bodily and spiritual death resemble each other in some particulars, they must necessarily be alike in all; and thus giving to the image an extent of application not intended by Scripture. It is to the last of these errors especially which it is my desire on the present occasion to draw your attention. And to this end I would consider,

I. THE POINTS IN WHICH THE DEATH OF THE SOUL, spoken of in the text, DOES NOT RESEMBLE THE DEATH OF THE BODY; and,

II. THE POINTS IN WHICH IT DOES RESEMBLE IT.

And here I am to notice,

I. THE POINTS IN WHICH THE DEATH OF THE SOUL DOES NOT RESEMBLE THE DEATH OF THE BODY.

1. In the first place, then, it is evident that *spiritual death does not destroy the faculties and affections of the soul.*—By bodily death, every power of the body is at once extinguished. The inanimate body no longer sees, or tastes, or moves. But it is not thus in the case of the soul. The man spiritually dead, although he thinks uselessly or mischievously, is not without the faculty of thought. The understanding lives, although it comes to wrong conclusions. The will lives, although it pursues wrong ends: the imagination lives, but presents chiefly those images which are calculated to seduce the mind from God and holiness. Carry the man spiritually dead into the counting-house, the study, the farm, or the field of battle, and he may prove himself to be an active merchant, scholar, farmer, or soldier. It was probably of men busy and efficient in their different worldly callings that our Lord said, "Let the dead bury their dead." It was of one who had been a most vigorous offender that he said, "This my son was dead, and is alive again." It is of those full of life

us to their favourite objects, the Apostle declares, "She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth." In all these cases, the powers are not destroyed, but perverted; the stream is not dried up, but is forced out of its proper channel.

2. In the second place, *the man spiritually dead is still in a state of responsibility.*—Bodily death puts an end to responsibility. "The grave," says Hezekiah, "cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth." "In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall lie," says the Wise Man. It is impossible to conceive an individual, by any movement or act of his own, changing his circumstances with regard to God after the body has paid the last debt of nature. But spiritual death does not destroy the responsibility of the soul. It is still capable, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, of awakening, seeking, desiring, believing, loving, acting; avoiding the good, and choosing the evil; and is therefore answerable for the exercise of each and all these powers. Accordingly, the dead in soul are called upon to turn, to repent, to pray, to watch, to forbear, to act; and the most terrible penalties are attached to a negligence of these duties. Those who would teach us that man, in his natural state, is to lie as a mere mass, which is, somehow or other, and at some time or other, without a struggle on the part of the individual, to be put into action by the all-powerful grace of God, should remember, that the injunction of Scripture is not to wait *for* God, but to "wait *upon*" him; not sluggishly to slumber till the cure comes, but, in the strength of God, to stretch out the withered arm in order to obtain the cure. Let no man, therefore, be the actual state of his soul what it may, conceive himself discharged, by what is called in the text the death of the soul, from any of the obligations of the living man. The individual to whom improvement is possible, is a responsible individual; and, should he die the second death—even

amidst the agonies of perdition—he shall be compelled to acknowledge himself the author of his own perdition.

3. In the third place, bodily and spiritual death are different in this respect, that in the last case *life is within every man's reach.*—When once the spark of life is quenched in the body, nothing short of a miracle can restore it. In anguish of soul the mourning friends retire from the awful scene, conscious that art has exhausted its resources, and that the same body cannot be restored to vigour and action. But in the case of the soul it is different. It would be madness for the physician of the body to say to the man in whom animal life was extinct, "Awake," and "arise." But the language of God, to the man dead in trespasses and sins, is, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Who does not see the importance of this distinction? If it did not exist, with what feelings of dismay must we come together to-day! Hope would be as entirely banished from earth as from the region of punishment. The unbeliever must remain an unbeliever; the guilty remain unpardoned, and the corrupt unsanctified. But when cheered by the conviction that the "dead" in soul *may* be "quickened;" may be brought to life by the power of Divine grace; may feel the reviving touch of the Spirit of God, and spring, from the cell of condemnation and embrace of death, into all the holy energy, and living beauty, and usefulness of the regenerated man; how are our terrors diminished! how are our expectations kindled, and our joys enlarged! how may we venture to hope that the voice of the Great Father will at some future period proclaim, with regard even to the worst man in this assembly, he "shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord!"—Glorious consideration! What a charm does it shed over every labour of the minister, the parent, the private friend—over the hour of prayer, and even the last struggles of death! 'I know,' may

the Christian say, 'the omnipotence of God; I know the munificence of his mercy; I know that he is able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto Him; I know that the prodigal of many years, the oldest offender, the widest wanderer from the flock, *may* be brought back to the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul; and therefore I venture to "hope unto the end," and am comforted.

But let us now proceed to consider,

II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE DEATH OF THE BODY AND OF THE SOUL RESEMBLE EACH OTHER.

1. In the first place, it is obvious that *they spring from the same source.*—Sin, in fact, is alike the parent of both. It is equally true in both cases, that, "through the offence of one, many are dead;" that the transgression of our first parent, which filled our houses with disease, and our streets with mourners, has also inflicted upon us that deeper curse of corruption which estranges us from God, and brings us under the solemn sentence of his law. Sin, which sows the seeds of bodily dissolution, sows the seeds of spiritual death. Sin indisposes us to holiness, blinds the eyes, sears the conscience, shuts and depraves the heart, and fits us for the inheritance of the spirits in darkness. Who, with a just view of the consequences of transgression, can reasonably make light of it? Who can see it thus scattering death and condemnation in its course, and not turn from that course to the happier path of the Divine commandments?

2. But, secondly, bodily and spiritual death are *alike in their universality.*—Of the one it is said, "it is appointed unto men once to die;" of the other, "if one died for all, then were *all* dead." As the sentence of bodily death has passed on all men, so has that of spiritual death. It is not more certain that you, as an individual, shall die in body, than that your soul, if as

yet unawakened and unchanged, is already dead. It is true, indeed, that spiritual life may be, and ordinarily is, imperceptibly communicated; that its growth may be most gradual—"first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear;" that it may begin in one sacred ordinance, and may be completed in another; that it may commence and be completed, though we have no warrant to expect it will, in the absence of all means of grace or ordinances of religion; that the earliest years of our existence may be gilded by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, or that the last only may be illuminated by its lingering rays; that we may be altogether unable to say at what period the heart awoke, and cast away its idols, and devoted itself to the service of a crucified Saviour. But, whatever may be the season of the change, and whatever the means of accomplishment, that change *must take place*, before a man can deserve the name, or enjoy the hopes, of a real servant of the Redeemer. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God:" "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:" "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Among those spirits of the just, who shall tread for ever the golden pavement of heaven, and participate in its joys, there shall not be one who has not been awakened to life and action, to faith, and love, and obedience, by the mighty energies of the Spirit of the living God.

3. But, thirdly, spiritual death resembles that of the body in many of *its consequences*.

In the first place, who can survey the dead in body without being awfully impressed by the fact of their *utter insensibility* to those persons and objects which in other circumstances were most delightful to them? Carry into the presence of the body, in which the spark of life is extinguished, the child, the wife, the friend, around whom all the living affections were wrapped; and where is the smile of affection now? where is the

beaming eye, and the beating pulse, and the outstretched hand? And thus is it in the case of spiritual death. To the new-created Adam,—to our first parent as he came from the hands of his Maker, and before the predicted curse had fallen upon him—God, and the things of God; the soul, with all, its high capacities, and tastes, and endowments; heaven, with all its bright and astonishing realities; were the objects of regard, and desire, and pursuit. But place the image of God, his tenderness and his truth, his promises and his grace, before the fallen and unconverted man, and he has no perception of the beauties of holiness. Preach to him, and he has no ear for it. Tender to him the bread of life, and he has no taste for it. Show him the lake of fire, or the sparkling turrets of the heavenly city, and he is equally indifferent to both. The sensibility of the soul is dead.

In like manner, in bodily death the individual *fulfils no one of the functions or duties which employ the strength of the living man.*—You miss the friend of your heart at every turn where you were accustomed to meet him, at every wheel in the machine of domestic comfort which he was accustomed to set in motion. Even the occupations common to all men, necessary to all men, natural and delightful to all men, do not rouse him from his dream of forgetfulness, from the cold and unyielding arms of death. Thus, also, in the case of spiritual death. Place before the impenitent and unconverted man the strongest calls of duty, nature, and necessity, and he remains in a state of torpor and death. In vain the Voice which shaketh the heavens, calls for obedience, and faith, and love. God "stretches out his hand;" but his creature does not "regard" him.—What a state is this, my brethren! how awful in itself! how offensive to the great God! how decisive of the future destiny of the miserable creature thus dead in sin, except the bands of death be broken, and a new existence be communicated to him.

In the third and last place, *the same Divine Power, which alone can give life to the body, is that which must give life to the soul.*—The act of creation, of forming something out of nothing, is universally ascribed to God alone. He "moved upon the face of the waters;" He said, "Let there be light;" He "breathed into the nostrils the breath of life;" and all this fair world, with its inhabitants, were the works of His originating hand. And it is He who, in like manner, must give to the soul its new birth, existence, character, properties, tastes, feelings, and habits: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."—You tremble at the sentence of death which hangs over you—you feel and deplore the deadness of soul which you cannot cure. The cure, my brethren, must be sought from the hands of Infinite Power. He who breathed upon the valley of bones, and the dead bones lived, must breathe upon the soul, ere it can arise from the spiritual grave, and walk abroad in all the liberty, and beauty, and holiness, of the children of God.

But, my brethren, I must here close this examination, to make a short practical use of it.

1. Let me first speak *to those who may not yet have escaped from the grave of spiritual death.*—To them let me say, How affecting, and indeed awful, is the picture of the world presented to us by the image of the text! Are all those who are not in earnest in religion, who have not felt their sins, and have not fled to the Refuge set before them in the cross of a Saviour, to be considered as "*dead* in trespasses and sins?" Is that man, so diligent and vigorous in all the business of life, possibly *dead* in the sight of God? Is the person so young, so blooming, so gay, "*dead*" in the eye of heaven? Is every one who "liveth in pleasure *dead* while she liveth?" Endeavour, then, to bring the subject home to your own case. What, my brethren, are your own circumstances? If God were at

this instant to inflict the stroke of bodily death on all in this congregation who are spiritually dead, what would be the consequence to yourselves? Would the shaft of death pass by you, or should you fall under the awful visitation? And what would be the result of such a dispensation to those immediately connected with you? would some fall, and some escape? would not whole families perish under the bolt of Divine vengeance? What is the state of the child, or friend, or neighbour, at this instant sitting at our side? Are they yet dead in the sight of God; and can we be content to live on calmly and indolently, without making a serious and tender effort to bring them to God and to happiness? Shall we not endeavour to lift the veil of the eternal world, and show them the lake of fire, the worm that never dies, the throne of eternal judgment, the terrors of an angry God? Are silence and insensibility in such a case, compatible even with common humanity? We could not let an individual sink upon the bed of death without an effort to save him; and shall we suffer him to go down into the pit of perdition, when a solemn rebuke, or a tender invitation, might, under the Divine blessing, snatch him from everlasting perdition?—O Lord, fill us with the love of souls, with a deep sense of eternal things, with a tender, anxious, generous desire for the deliverance of a lost world.

2. In conclusion, I would address myself *to those individuals who trust that this transition from death unto life is, in some measure, accomplished in themselves;* and that they are, by the infinite mercy of a Redeemer, translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God.—Such individuals I would earnestly entreat to consider the image under which the change, which they conceive to have taken place upon themselves, is described in Scripture. The real servants of God are described as brought to life, by the power of the Spirit upon their souls. Religion, therefore, my Christian

brethren, is not a mere nominal and empty profession, —the running a round of lifeless ceremonies, the adoption of a new theological creed, or the outward adherence to a particular church, however admirable;—but it is a new life, the first spark of which is from above; of which a state of grace upon earth may be considered as the infancy, and a state of glory as the manhood and maturity. Let your own religion, then, my Christian brethren, display all the vitality and vigour which such an image implies. Endeavour to die to the world, and live unto God; to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto" Him. Consecrate every power and faculty of the new man to His service. Let it be seen that you "have passed from death unto life," not merely by your love of the brethren, but by your active resistance to every sin, and active pursuit of every duty. Amidst the struggles and pains involved in such a career of self-denial, purity, and devotion, console yourselves by the remembrance, that, if the morning of spiritual life be heavy and lowering, it will in the end brighten into perfect day. And how rapidly is that day approaching! How rapidly are disease and death accomplishing the hopes of the Christian, whilst they extinguish the hopes and joys of others! "We know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "Your life is hid with Christ in God: when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." What more can the heart desire? Strive, my brethren, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to live up to your hopes and privileges. Live here as the heirs of a better world; exhibiting upon earth the tempers and dispositions of heaven; and amidst all the toils and trials of a difficult existence, glorifying Him, with whom you hope to dwell, in uninterrupted communion and joy, when time shall be no longer.

SERMON XXI.

THE DESIRE OF THE SERVANT OF GOD.

PSA. xxvii. 4, 5.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

THE actions, although a necessary, are not a sufficient, test of the state of the heart before God. It is true, for example, that a religious will be a bountiful man; but it is not necessarily true that a bountiful will be a religious man. We may be bountiful because we love God; in which case our bounty is religious;—or because we are indifferent to the money; in which case bounty is the mere result of natural taste;—or, finally, from a spirit of ostentation; in which case our bounty is a crime. The conduct, therefore—I may repeat the assertion—though an essential, it is not of itself a decisive, test as to the real condition of the man.

Such being the case, it ought to be considered as one of the circumstances which give peculiar value to the Holy Scriptures, that they unfold to us so much, not merely of the life, but of the mind, of the servants of God; that they conduct us, as it were, to the hidden

springs of thought, feeling, and action, and thus supply us with a standard to which we may bring the workings of our own souls. Such, amongst a multitude of other examples, is the character of the text which has been now read to you. And I shall proceed, in dependence upon the Divine blessing, to notice,

I. The LEADING DESIRE OF THE SOUL OF DAVID, as here described.

II. The DEPTH AND EARNESTNESS OF THAT DESIRE.

III. The MOTIVE TO WHICH HE TRACES IT.

I. In the first place, we are to consider THE LEADING DESIRE OF DAVID, as stated in the text. "*One thing*," he says, "*have I desired of the Lord.... that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.*"

If, my Christian brethren, we have a real value for any individual, the pain of exclusion from his presence, and the joy of admission to it, are among the strongest emotions of the mind. And this is as true in religion as in any other affection of our nature. The man indifferent to his Redeemer, feels no desire to approach his presence. The public and private worship of God, the study of his word, meditation upon his mercies, devout participation in his sacraments, which may be considered as so many steps of approach to the Divine presence, have no charms for such an individual. But, on the contrary, the servants of God are said by the Psalmist to "long after him," and to "thirst for him," as the "hart panteth after the water-brooks." And he illustrates, by an image of the greatest beauty, the joy and security of the soul which has reached this delightful presence: "The sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house:

they will be still praising thee." But let us examine with more precision the object assigned in the text for this desire to approach God.

1. In the first place, it is the wish of the Psalmist, as he says, to "*behold the beauty of the Lord.*"—And in every true servant of God, the anxiety he feels thus to draw nigh to his God and Saviour is prompted, in part, by a similar wish. If the traveller has caught, amid the thickening shadows of the evening, a hasty and imperfect glimpse of some splendid landscape, he longs for the hour when morning will throw open the sources of light, and shed its golden ray over the valley of clouds. If, in like manner, the hasty glance we have enjoyed of the character and attainments of any particular individual has discovered to us many points of attraction, how earnestly do we wish for larger acquaintance and closer communion with him! And it is thus in religion. The little which the servants of the Lord know of the Master they serve, fills them with anxiety to obtain a more intimate acquaintance with his dispensations and character. They search for Him in his works—they contemplate Him in his word—and, charmed with the glories and beauties which develope themselves to the believing eye, they long altogether to rend away the veil which still darkens and perplexes the view, and to see as they are seen, and know as they are known. *Man* constantly disappoints us. His truth is so mingled with error, his virtues are so shaded by defects, his greatness is so little, his purity so defiled, and his constancy so inconstant, that the soul, vexed and dissatisfied with the contemplation of so imperfect an object, thirsts for some higher object and model on which it may rest and be satisfied. *That* perfect model is the character of God. Atheists, who never contemplate it, almost uniformly sink into the grossest depravities. Angels, who contemplate nothing else, attain to the highest purity: "We shall be like Him, *for* we shall see Him as he is." And the delight of the

Christian is to begin upon earth the study which shall be his occupation and his joy through all the ages of eternity.

2. But the desire of the Psalmist, thus to dwell in the house of God, is not prompted alone by the wish to behold the beauty of the Lord, but also, as he adds, by a wish to "*inquire* in his temple."—It is possible, my Christian brethren, to admire the poetry or the eloquence of Scripture, without feeling the slightest disposition to comply with its precepts. It is possible even to entertain the highest conceptions of the Divine perfections, without any wish to graft those perfections on our own character. In the real servant of God, however, the disposition to "behold his beauty" is always coupled with the wish to "inquire" into his will. When the Lord spake to Samuel in the vision of the night, the infant prophet was instructed by Eli to answer, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth!" When it pleased God to arrest St. Paul on his way to Damascus, the Apostle immediately asked, "What wilt thou have me to do?" And this is the frame of mind in which the real convert will ever be found. In all his approaches to the Throne of Grace; in taking up the Volume of Truth; in entering the courts of the Lord; in kneeling at the Table of his Supper; and, in short, in every moment of intercourse between Heaven and earth, the servant of the Lord "*inquires*." He rejoices to escape from the ignorance and errors of man, to the wisdom of God; to learn, and to fulfil the will of Him who wheels the universe in its course, and fixes the destiny of its crowded inhabitants. Oh that such were the state of heart in every individual to whom I am speaking! that the inquiry were breathing in the soul and bursting from the lip of every member of this congregation, 'Lord, what is thy will concerning me?' —The instructions of the world, my brethren, will almost infallibly mislead you; the suggestions of your own heart will mislead you: God is the only safe and

sufficient Guide of his creatures. The clue to all the perplexed labyrinth of duty is in his hands. Say to Him, in the words of another petitioner, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;" and He will shed light over all your doubts, disclose to you the recesses of truth, give clearness to your views, decision to your judgment, and confidence to your heart: he will "stablish, strengthen, settle you," and make you his own for ever and ever.

II. But I come, secondly, to consider THE DEPTH AND EARNESTNESS OF THIS DESIRE IN THE MIND OF DAVID.

1. In the first place, he says, "*One* thing have I desired."—There were doubtless other gifts of God, for which, as far as they were compatible with the will of the Lord concerning him, the Psalmist wished. He desired health, competence, kind friends, and an exemption from as many of the trials of life, and the presence of as many of its comforts, as might be consistent with his soul's welfare. But this "*one* thing," the presence and favour of his God, a clearer view of his perfections, and a deeper acquaintance with his will, he desired with such emphasis and intenseness, that no other wish of the soul was to be compared with it. Religion was not with him one among many pursuits, many tastes, and many desires; but the object which he pursued the first, the last, and above all. Can the same fact be stated with regard to any large number of those by whom we are surrounded? Most men have their *one* thing, their favourite object of pursuit. With some, it is money; with some, pleasure; with some, admiration; with some, influence. With how few is it eternity! And yet how truly has it been said, that "nothing is of much real importance but eternity!" If the money which to-day glitters in the coffer, may to-morrow witness against us at the bar of God—if the evening of dissipation may terminate in the night of

death—if the robe of honour may, in a moment, be exchanged for a shroud—if influence abused must be the ruin of the abuser—then he, and he only, is the wise man, who gives the heart to God, and to his duties; and who, however large or small the measure of earthly gifts bestowed upon him, in patience possesses his soul, and goes on his way peaceful and rejoicing.

2. But the strength of this desire in the mind of David, is marked by another expression of the text: "that will *I seek after.*"—If, my brethren, religion consisted exclusively in wishing and "desiring," the number of real Christians would be greatly multiplied in society. That heart must be dark indeed in which no spark of desire after the Divine presence and love is ever lighted up—which can think of Christ, and never wish to be with him—which can catch a glimpse of the world of spirits, without longing to sit down on their golden thrones, or accompany their flights through the regions of light and love. Even that Prophet who "loved the wages of unrighteousness," desired that his "death" might be "the death of the righteous," and his "latter end" like theirs.—But all such desires may be even keenly felt without our possessing the frame of mind which is described in the text. We may covet a treasure, without setting ourselves to "seek after it." We way wish for the abundance of the harvest, without having any disposition to cultivate the soil. How large is the number of idlers, who put the wish for the act; who loiter through the stages of an unprofitable existence, and at last sink, astonished and confounded, into the gulf from which they have made no real and adequate effort to escape! "That," says David, "*will I seek after.*" May God put the same resolution into the mind of every individual amongst us! In that case, how many would ask for grace who now wait for it! How many would strive to climb to heaven, who now seem to expect the heavens to bow down to them! How would the house of the Lord be thronged, and

our secret devotions multiplied! How would the history of the age of John be renewed, "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force!"—How would men regard it as the "*one*" object worth pursuing, and pursue that object with all their heart! How would all that is cold and dead in our nature, like the bodies in the vision of bones when animated by the breath of the Lord, awake and arise, and go forth to the conflict with corruption, and to the extension and establishment of the kingdom of God! Delightful indeed is the picture presented to us by the Prophet, of that period, when the church of God, governed by this awakening impulse, shall bend their course from the region of sin and apostacy, and draw near to the promised land. "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." How great the change in the aspect and state of society, when *one* desire shall fill every heart, and prompt every action; when none shall halt between two opinions; when the only controversy shall be to "provoke" each other "to love and to good works;" when all languor, and lingering, and doubting, and compromising shall come to an end; when, as it is said in the same chapter to which I have referred, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

III. But I come now, in the third and last place, to consider THE MOTIVE TO which the Psalmist traces THIS EARNEST DESIRE TO DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

How distinct and beautiful is the language in which

he describes the motives by which these desires after God have been mainly prompted: "*In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret place of his tabernacle shall he hide me: he shall set me upon a rock.*" David had formed too intimate an acquaintance, both with the difficulties of life and the corruptions of his own heart, to feel satisfied with a religion which did not provide for what he calls "the time of trouble." He had been persecuted by Saul; he had been driven from his throne by his own child; he had seen that child, so dear to him even in spite of his rebellion, perish in the face of his enemies; he had, especially, been rent to the inmost heart by the pangs of an accusing conscience, by an arrow drawn from the quiver of an insulted and angry God. Of what value, then, to him, was a Friend who could bear his burdens, draw the weapon of terror and remorse from the throbbing wound, and exchange the spirit of heaviness for the garments of joy! But all this his God had already done for him; and all this he was sure the Lord would continue to do. More than once he had already entered the "*pavilion*" of the Great Comforter —more than once he had sheltered himself in the "*secret place of that tabernacle*"—more than once he had stood on "*the rock*" of the Divine promises, and found it too lofty for any shaft of calamity to reach his bosom. —May the history and the conviction of the Psalmist, as to this point, be yours! The pavilion of the Lord is not destroyed, but is, I may say, of loftier and ampler dimensions than in the days of which David wrote. The "Rock" remains; and, while the clouds of life roll and beat at its base, it continues to lift its head above the storm, and to bask in the perpetual sunshine of the Divine Presence. Is there any man among us who will say he needs no defence; no shelter from the storms of life; no refuge from the guilt of sin, and the dominion of corruption? Let the individual, thus exempted from the general lot and trials of his species,

pursue, if it seem well to him, *his* course in proud independence of his God and Saviour. Let that man go naked to the battle who needs no armour. But let *us*, who feel and acknowledge ourselves to be weak, and guilty, and miserable, and lost without God, cry aloud, "The Lord is my strength and shield; my heart trusteth in him, and I am helped:" "Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

In conclusion, I would beg permission to state two observations, which appear to be of importance as connected with this subject.

In the first place, if there is but "*one thing*," the presence or favour of God, which is worthy of eager and steady pursuit, how *easily may the heart reconcile itself to the want or loss of those other things which we are sometimes disposed to covet, even with feverish anxiety!*—Poverty or sickness, the desertion of friends, or their death, strike from under the man of the world all the props on which he has been accustomed to lean. But they cannot touch the "one thing" of the man of God; and therefore ought not deeply to affect his happiness. My brethren, if you are heirs of the promises of God, it is your duty, as it is your privilege, to set the trials of life at defiance—to move in an atmosphere which they cannot reach—to live on the top of the mountain, without regarding the storm which rages beneath. Let us see in you a temper of mind corresponding with your privileges. When disappointment or affliction come, let us see that you have entered the "pavilion," or are seated on the "rock;" that you are calm where others are agitated, and cheerful where others are distressed. What ought to trouble the man to whom the Lord has said, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper:" "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms?" Shall not our hearts reply, "Thou hast been a strength

to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat.... in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast?" Strive, my brethren, to wipe away from religion the reproach of a gloomy countenance and a murmuring spirit; and let it be seen, that the most cheerful and happy, as well as the most honourable and useful, of all occupations, is the service of God and our Redeemer.

In the next place, *what an encouragement does the language of the text supply for the pursuit of that future world, which the mercy of God offers to the prayers and labours of his creatures!*—When David spoke in the text of "*dwelling in the house of God all the days of his life*," it can scarcely be conceived that his view was confined to the imperfect approach of the soul to its Maker in this state of being. It is next to impossible, that, intimate as he was with the world of rest and glory, his soul should not look forward to the period when he should spread his wings, and flee away to the seats of tranquillity and joy. It is in that world alone, my Christian brethren, that we can enjoy the presence of the Lord without interruption, and without end. And although it be true, that in that state of existence the servant of God will not need to be sheltered in the "pavilion," or to be seated upon the "rock" of safety—for into that world calamity and sin can have no entrance—yet even there the remembrance of the shelter and defence which has been given to him here, will follow him, and constitute perhaps the strongest motive to gratitude and praise. There, as on a height from whence all the passages of the life upon earth may be surveyed at a single glance, the triumphant Christian will discover the numerous instances in which the grace of his God has prevented and followed him; in which his Redeemer has "guided him by his counsel" before he "received him up into glory."—There he shall "dwell in the house" of the

Lord for ever;—and dwell, not, as here, in the porch of the temple, but in its deep, and safe, and bright recesses; not beside the throne of clouds, but the throne of glory; not in a world of probation, but of triumph, and of unmixed and unchanging joy. There our intercourse with God will no longer be capricious and transient. The spirit of devotion will never flag, or the light of love grow dim, or the sun of the Divine Presence go down.—O, my Christian brethren, what a prospect to contemplate, and what a world to live for! May the Lord of all power and might make us meet for this bright inheritance!—Come, thou "Desire of all nations," Thou in whom all the desires of thy people begin and terminate; come, and lift up our grovelling and reluctant souls to the world where Thou dwellest. Throw wide to us the doors of the house of many mansions; so that even here we may obtain a view of its happy chambers, and may finally take possession of them for ever. Plead for us at the Throne of Love, Thou who "alone art worthy." Clothe us in thy own merits, and "present us faultless before the presence of his glory." Help us, Thou "mighty to save," to "overcome," and to sit down with thee in thy Throne, as thou hast overcome, and art set down on the throne of thy Father.

SERMON XXII.

THE PRISONER OF HOPE.

ZECH. ix. 12.

Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.

It is the general assumption of the passage with which the text is connected, and of the text itself, that the multitudes in this fallen world need some other place of refuge than that which they have already discovered. If they had already *found* peace and security, there could be no necessity for directing them to "*turn*" to any new strong hold, or place of defence. And does not such a supposition find too strong a warrant in the actual circumstances of society? Is it not the fact, that large numbers are wandering over the face of the world, who, like the bird of Noah when dismissed from the ark, find no resting-place for the sole of their feet? Are not multitudes rather in quest of happiness, than actually happy; rather grasping at something they do not possess, than satisfied with their present acquisitions?

This being the case, let us enter, in dependence upon the Divine blessing, on the consideration of the text, which, though especially applicable to persons so circumstanced, will be found, I think, not without importance to every individual among us.

It will be my endeavour to examine,

I. THE FIGURE UNDER WHICH THE TEXT DESCRIBES THE GREAT MASS OF MANKIND.
II. THE COUNSEL WHICH IT GIVES THEM.

I. We are to consider, in the first place, THE FIGURE UNDER WHICH THE TEXT DESCRIBES THE GREAT MASS OF MANKIND.

1. And, first, it addresses them as "*prisoners.*"—And surely, my Christian brethren, no title can describe with more precision the circumstances of the children of men. Even the *real servant of God* finds much to remind him that he has not yet reached the region of perfect liberty. Many are the infirmities which hang about him, and convince him that the chain of his sins, if weakened, is not yet effectually broken. He still feels himself fettered in prayer, in faith, in love, in obedience. When his affections should rise to God, he discovers them too often to be fastened to earth. He finds the wings of his devotion clipped; his path to glory obstructed; and, as one barrier is surmounted, another presenting itself, which checks his progress, and limits his approaches to the fountain of his hopes and happiness.

And as to *the man of the world*, he is altogether a prisoner. Who, in fact, are such absolute slaves, as those obsequious followers of the world who boast the most loudly of their freedom? What! a freeman, and the slave of lust, temper, and appetite? Is your understanding free from prejudice? Is your conscience free to follow its own dictates? Are your affections free to rise to the Supreme Source of all purity and joy? Are your hands at liberty to labour for God? Are your feet at liberty to walk in the path of duty? Are you not for the present a slave to vanity or ambition, to the despotism of custom or of fashion? Dare you think for yourself, speak for yourself, act for yourself? How desperate is that perversion of language which calls it liberty to be thus dragged at the chariot-

wheel of our corruptions; to be thus lashed on, as by some invisible hand, to do every day what the conscience condemns; to lift the standard of rebellion against the Being whose boundless power and unchanging holiness we see, and acknowledge, and feel! Free! Thou poor deluded creature! thine is the most horrible of all bondage. The world is thy dungeon; the great enemy of souls thy jailor; the first link of thy chains is in his hand; and he who sinks to the grave under this terrible grasp, shall find himself consigned to the pit whose smoke ascendeth for ever and ever. Thine is indeed a slavery with which no other may be compared. In the very depth of other slavery the *mind* may be free: the fetter and the scourge cannot subdue the soul: but in this case, the iron has, as it were, entered into the soul—the mind is in bondage, and is "led captive by the devil at his will."

2. But, secondly under this head; mankind are addressed in the text as the "prisoners of *hope*."—In other words, though addressed as prisoners, it is not as prisoners without hope, as prisoners bound with chains too strong, under any possible circumstances, to be broken.

There are, indeed, my Christian brethren, prisoners *without* hope. Such, for instance, are those wretched spirits who are said to be "reserved in chains" for the darkness and anguish of the last day;—offenders for whom no means of escape have been devised, and who are shut out, as far as we know, for ever, from the covenant of grace, and the family and presence of God. In the horrid dungeon designed for their abode, 'hope never comes, that comes to all.'

Such prisoners, also, are those, belonging to the family of man, who have gone down impenitent to that grave in which "there is no repentance;" who have wasted the day of grace; who have trampled on the offers of mercy; who have shut their eyes upon the truth, till the darkness of eternal death has enveloped

them.—Oh, what would not either of these miserable classes sacrifice, to be once more addressed as the "prisoners of *hope?*"—as prisoners who might be allowed to anticipate some termination to their woe—as prisoners placed within the possibilities of salvation! But, alas! Scripture opens for them no one avenue by which peace may enter, or by which brighter anticipations may break in upon the gloom and wretchedness of their minds.

But, my brethren, with the exception of these two classes, *all* ranks and divisions of created beings, who have fallen from God, are to be considered as "prisoners of *hope*." They are prisoners, that is, with the possibility of escaping from their dungeon, and obtaining the freedom and the privileges of the children of God.

Need I speak, for instance, of the hopes which are encouraged in the real believer in Christ? Let his remaining bonds be what they will, how cheering are the offers and promises which are made to him! For him are spread wide the gates to present peace and future glory: to the seat of mercy here, and the throne of joy hereafter. To him it is said, "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for in the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption:" "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." And it is such prisoners who are able to answer, "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee"—"the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble." To such persons, in fact, Hope is every where present; shedding, from her large and liberal hand, a ray of light over the darkest prospects; giving them a thousand consolations, unknown to all but themselves; healing that sickness of the soul under which others suffer from the delay of their wishes; cheering them in life, sustaining them in death, and never quitting them till, at the gate of heaven, she delivers them over into the hands of Joy, with whom they dwell for evermore.

But the blessing of hope is not granted exclusively to the advanced and distinguished servant of God. Some sincere Christians may feel, with the deepest sorrow of heart, how far they are from the religious attainments of such an individual. They may know little of his clearness of views, his strength of faith, his triumph of joy. But, are you contrite and lowly? Do you desire and seek after better things? If so, how truly is your case described in the book of Ezra! "Ye have trespassed against your God, yet now is there hope concerning thee." If there is much in your circumstances to shut out joy, there is also much to encourage expectation. In the lowest circumstances, "it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." You are not, my afflicted brother, called to despair. There is no insuperable obstacle in your way to God. Be the dungeon into which you have plunged yourself ever so dark, there are, as it were, rents in its walls from which you may look out, and survey the broad and bright river which waters the paradise of God, its green pastures, its living fountains, "the city which hath foundations;" and you may even now hope, if penitent and believing, to be enrolled amongst the inhabitants of that holy world, and to dwell for ever with them in the bosom of your God.

But, in short, to whom, with the exception of those classes to whom I have referred already—to whom shall we deny the privilege of *hope?* Where is the abyss too deep for it to penetrate? where is the prison which the Angel of the Covenant cannot enter, and touch the chains of the captive, and "bid the oppressed go free?" While there is life, is there not hope? Is not the sinner encouraged to come, even at the eleventh hour, to the cross of his Redeemer; to seek, in the moment of conscious guilt, and in the very jaws of ruin, to be filled out of the "fulness of Him that filleth all in all?" Let me, then, at the present moment, say to

those the most destitute and guilty,—'Ye prisoners of hope, seek the refuge which is even yet open to you. The hand of the Redeemer can remove every fetter which binds you. You may still cross the golden threshold, and stand in the presence and rejoice in the salvation of God. Though prisoners now, you may exchange, at the foot of the cross, guilt for pardon, chains for liberty, despair for hope, and even hope itself for the unutterable joy of the kingdom of the Lord.' Again, and again, then, I would say, 'Ye prisoners of hope, arise: sink not under the burden of your chains, or under the pressure of your transgressions. "There is hope in your end." And even now, the Lord of life, the Father of the fatherless, invites you to approach Him. His language is, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in *me* is thine help." Use that help, and you shall triumph in the name of the Lord.'

But let us proceed to consider,

II. THE COUNSEL GIVEN TO US IN THE TEXT, "*Turn you to the strong hold*, ye prisoners of hope."

1. In the first place, *a strong hold is here pointed out to you.*—And what is meant by this "strong hold?" I should answer, Every refuge which the mercy of God has provided for his guilty creatures. But especially that Refuge is intended to which every other is the mere porch or entrance, and of which it furnishes but the type and the shadow. I mean the love, the merits, and the righteousness of the Saviour of sinners, the Son of God, the Redeemer of a lost world. "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:" "I will raise unto David a righteous branch:" "This is his name, The Lord our Righteousness." Here, then, is the tower in which the "prisoner of hope" is to find refuge.—And say, my brethren, what property can be wanting in a strong hold, which that of the Christian does not possess?

Is it that it should be capable of receiving all who flee to it? "He gave himself," it is said, "a ransom for *all*." Is it that a sufficient provision should be made for the comfort of those who have there sought their refuge? "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Is it that it should be impregnable to the enemy? "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand:" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress,—or life, or death,—or any other creature?—I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." How studiously is this Place of Refuge constructed with a reference to the wants and the apprehensions of human nature! How does it lift its head above the storms of life, and the assaults of the great enemy! Well may the man who has entered it say, "Thou art my Hiding-place: Thou shalt preserve me from trouble: Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance:" There is "come out of Zion, the Deliverer:" "The Lord is mine helper; I will not fear what man can do unto me."

2. But, secondly under this head; we are directed *to turn* to this Strong Hold. Let us, therefore, consider, finally, what is implied in this command.

In the first place, in order to avail ourselves of this place of refuge, we must *be persuaded of the insufficiency of every other*.—How many empires have been lost, by the captains of the war taking up, on the approach of the enemy, some untenable post, instead of falling back on the lines impregnable to the most formidable attack! And it is thus in religion. Many neglect to cultivate true contrition of heart and faith in a Redeemer, because they cannot as yet bring themselves to abandon some other scheme of safety, which prejudice or pride has suggested to their minds. One trusts to his comparative innocence; another, to an imaginary fund of blindness and softness in the Divine

character; another, to some slight improvement in his own habits; another, to a doubtful superiority over his neighbour;—one, to the merit of his good works; another, to his abstinence from bad ones;—one, to the multitude of his charities; another, to the severity or constancy of his outward devotions. But each of these modes of escape, my brethren, if substituted for the one great Sacrifice of the Cross, is, in the strong language of Scripture, a mere "refuge of lies," and will be swept away in the tempest of the great day. The charities of life, the graces of the character, the qualities which sweeten and adorn human existence, and keep the frame of society together, will, more or less, be all found in the man who has taken refuge in the Strong Hold; for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." But these qualities are not the Strong Hold itself, and therefore must not be confounded with it. A renunciation of all merits, but those of Christ, is essential to all who would profit from his death.

In the next place, in order to avail ourselves of this Strong Hold, we must *be persuaded of its sufficiency for our safety.*—Who, in the time of extreme peril, would knowingly cast himself into a fortress, not only too weak for his protection, but likely, when assailed, to overwhelm him in its ruins? And there can be little doubt that a stronger conviction of the wisdom and competency of the Christian scheme of salvation, and of the all-sufficiency of the Saviour of sinners for our deliverance, would draw many within the sacred enclosure of the Gospel who now refuse to enter it. Some question even the Divinity of the Son of God; some consider the sufferings of the Cross to be designed merely to supply an example to other sufferers; some cannot convince themselves that the scheme of salvation by faith in the atonement of a Redeemer, can be consistent with the security of good morals; some, with a sort of diseased humility, denounce their own case as too bad to come within the circle of mercy; some

imagine, that, as to themselves, the day of the Divine compassion has passed over;—and thus, in various ways, the sufficiency of the "Strong Hold" is denied, and the "blood of Christ," in a sense, "trampled under foot, or counted an" unprofitable "thing." Would to God that such individuals could be persuaded to take the Scriptures as they find them, and no longer limit and straiten the promises of mercy so largely and liberally made to the contrite and believing. Hear the words of the Saviour of the world, even in the Old Testament: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:" "My salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people: The isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust:" "I, that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." And hear the description of the same Deliverer in the New Testament; "He shall save his people from their sins:" "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost:" "God hath raised up an horn of salvation for us." What more can the heart desire? Prisoners of hope, "turn ye to the Strong Hold;" for there is no danger from which it is not an all-sufficient refuge.

Once more: in order effectually to avail ourselves of this Strong Hold, it is essential that *we actually take possession of it.*—Would it be deemed sufficient, in a case of bodily peril, to stand at the foot of the fortress, to admire the loftiness of its towers, and the majesty of the rock on which it was erected; to applaud the additions which art had made to nature, the huge extent of its ramparts, and the variety of its means of defence? To be *safe*, we must do more than this: we must actually enter the fortress. And thus in religion. It is possible to be an admirer of the Gospel; to speak fluently in its defence; to connect together glittering periods with which to display its honours. But all this falls short of the mark. In order to profit from its offers, we must feel our own need of it; we must ac-

cept its offers; adopt its rules for the government of our lives; cheer our hearts with its promises; and, finally, welcome the great Author of it, as the Instructer, the Guardian, the Deliverer of our souls. When the enemy approaches, we must be found not lingering under the walls of the fortress, not carrying doubtful colours, not shifting from camp to camp; but loyally and fondly cleaving to the only Leader, lifting the only banner, and proclaiming the "only name" whereby we can be "saved."

And now, my Christian brethren, allow me to close this discourse with the statement of a few such inferences as the subject suggests.

1. In the first place, *what a confirmation do topics such as this lend to the authenticity of that faith into which we are baptized!*—An impostor in medicine will generally carry this mark of deceit along with him, that his prescriptions are not regulated by the case submitted to his inspection. The master in medicine, on the contrary, may be recognized by the precise fitness of his remedy to the disease before him. How decisively then do such passages as the text set the seal of authenticity to the religion of Scripture! Other religious systems address themselves to man as in a state of strength, of comfort, and of triumph; a state of which, we may confidently say, that, in this fallen world, he knows nothing. The religion of the Scriptures, on the other hand, bids him "turn to the Strong Hold;" the want of which he feels throughout every stage of his existence. Outward evidence to religion, my Christian brethren, is no doubt of high value; but to some minds it is difficult of access, and to others hard to be understood. Here, then, we have a species of evidence intelligible to all, accessible to all; so that he who, from his ignorance or dulness, may not be able to say, I "have found Him of whom.... the prophets did write," may yet say, I have found Him

whom my soul needeth; whose lessons teach me, whose promises comfort me; who knows my most secret wants and wishes, and meets them with the appropriate remedy. Shall I not say of Him, "Truly, this was the Son of God?"

2. But, lastly, my Christian brethren, if the provision made in the Gospel for the wants and distresses of human nature be one mark of its Divine origin, *let us take care to apply it to the use for which it is so emphatically designed.* Is it meant to heal the wounds of a bleeding world? Then carefully employ it for this compassionate purpose.

You are, perhaps, yourselves sufferers in your persons, or concerns, or family; and you apologize for depression of spirits, for the absence of a kind and social temper, for looks and words of gloom and despondency, by the supposed fact, that you carry about with you a wound too deep for any hand to reach, and any medicine to relieve. But is such a supposition compatible with the property of the Gospel on which we have been dwelling to-day? No, my brethren, though your pang lie too deep to be reached by any human hand, it does not lie beyond the reach of the hand of God. In the days of our Lord's residence upon earth, when the diseased were cast in crowds at his feet, it is said, "they were healed of *whatsoever* disease they had." And such will always be the effect of a steady and honest application of the remedies of the Gospel. "Whatsoever" be the care which gnaws the soul, or the pang which rends it, the remedy is adequate to the disease: "Trust in the Lord, and verily thou shalt be" helped.

And thus, also, in your labours for *the happiness of others.*—Nothing is more affecting than to observe the misdirected efforts of men to secure the comforts of those they love—of their wives, their children, their friends. There is but one sufficient remedy for the cares of life, and this remedy is the very last which, in

many instances, they think of applying. You rise early, and late take rest, to reap for those you love a harvest of riches, or honours, or worldly pleasures; and when you have secured it, you leave them perhaps ten times more the children of anxiety and affliction than before. Adopt, my Christian brethren, a new course. "Seek first," for those you love, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" and, if worldly possessions are not "added unto them," *that* shall be added which is the all-sufficient substitute for every other possession—the love and grace of their Redeemer. Strive, in short, in the strength and power of the Holy Spirit, to bring them to a state in which, supposing their worldly circumstances to be even as desperate as those of the first and best servants of God, they may be able to adopt their language: "In all things approving ourselves as the" servants of Christ, "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings .... as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Such, my brethren, is the language of those who have indeed "turned to the Strong Hold." And may "the God of hope" fill every one of us with the same peace in believing, till that happy hour when we shall exchange faith for sight, and hope for joy, in the immediate presence of our Redeemer.

SERMON XXIII.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER A MEMORIAL OF CHRIST.

LUKE xxii. 19.

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

THERE are many points of view, my Christian brethren, in which it is useful to contemplate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper;—as a means of grace; as a sign and seal of the covenant of mercy; as a pledge to assure us of the loving-kindness of the Lord. But it is my wish to-day chiefly to confine your attention to that particular view of this ordinance in which the text more especially presents it to us, viz. as *a memorial of the death of Christ*; "This do in remembrance of me"—'eat this bread, and drink this cup, in remembrance of the body and blood which I am about to offer on the cross for sinners.'—And may the Saviour, who gave this sacrament to his church, bless our humble attempt to contemplate the subject in a devout and profitable manner!

Considering, then, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper chiefly as a memorial of the death of Christ, in what may its importance and value be said more especially to consist?

I. In the first place, it affords a VISIBLE AND PERMANENT TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.

In a celebrated work on the subject of Deism, the four following marks are selected as those by which truth may be distinguished from falsehood :—

1. Facts, the author maintains, to be received as true, must be such as men's outward senses can judge of.
2. Such as are performed publicly, in the presence of witnesses.
3. Such as have public monuments, or actions, kept up in memory of them.
4. Such as have monuments and actions established and commencing at the same time with the facts themselves.

—And with such precision are these evidences of truth selected, that although a noted unbeliever is said to have directed his attention during twenty years to the detection of a single fabulous event, to which these marks are attached, he appears wholly to have failed of success. And we may challenge any man to try the experiment for himself. Let him select, for example, any marvel in the history of Mohammed, or of the gods of idolatry, and he will find that the whole of these marks do not meet in any one of them;—that either the alleged facts were not such as the senses could judge of; or that they were not performed in the presence of witnesses; or that there is no public monument of them; or that the monuments of them do not date their existence from the period at which the facts themselves are said to have occurred. On the contrary, apply these marks to the crucifixion of Christ, and we have an event of which the senses could judge; an event of public occurrence; an event of which we possess, in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, a monument, or memorial; and, moreover, a memorial contemporary with the very period in which it is contended that the crucifixion of the Son of God took place.

In this point of view, therefore, my Christian bre-

thren, even were nothing more to be alleged in its behalf, the sacred ordinance of the Supper of the Lord is of the highest importance. It may be said to give itself a death blow to Deism and infidelity. It leaves the scoffer, who proudly appeals to reason in distinction from faith, and laughs at the credulity of the lowly believer, without excuse; and shows us that unbelief is in fact as absurd as it is criminal.—If there should be any unhappy individual among us who has rashly rejected the Christian faith, let me humbly and anxiously implore him, on the present occasion, carefully to consider this point, and learn, under the Divine blessing, to do homage to that faith, of which, perhaps, he has been hitherto the reviler or the persecutor.—And if, on the contrary, there should be among us any doubting, timid, or wavering believer, let him, in the strength of his God, cling to this argument, as to a new anchor, in every hour of temptation, disquietude, or alarm.

II. But, secondly, this sacred ordinance is, in this particular view of it, of great value, inasmuch AS IT CALLS IN THE SENSES TO THE AID OF OTHER POWERS AND FACULTIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF PIETY.—Man is so constituted as to be much led and influenced by that which is presented to the senses. So convinced indeed are most men of the treachery both of the intellectual powers and the affections of the mind, and of the ease with which the most solemn and weighty topics slide from the memory, as anxiously to multiply the outward memorials of such events as are of high importance, and of which they desire to retain a deep and lively impression. With this conviction, they build monuments to the dead, and erect pillars of national victory. With this conviction the Tribes left on the other side Jordan erected an altar between themselves and their countrymen; and Joshua commanded the Jews to bring up the twelve stones out of Jordan.

And it is probably with a view to this infirmity of our nature, that the All-wise Governor of the world has himself been pleased, in many instances, to establish visible memorials of those events of which he desired to fix a clear and permanent impression in the mind of his creatures. With this object he planted his bow in the heavens, as a memorial that he would not again destroy the world by water. For this reason he commanded Moses to lay up the rod of Aaron, and some of the manna of the wilderness, together with the tables of stone, in the ark. And such probably is one of the ends designed to be accomplished by the sacred institution we are now called to consider. I cannot of course mean that the perpetuation of the truths of religion in the memory and affections of mankind have been confided merely to this ordinance. These truths possess other memorials, and other links of connexion with the mind—and especially the Sacred Scriptures. But it cannot be doubted that the facts and truths of the Gospel, its doctrines, lessons, threats, and promises, the fears of the bad, and the hopes and joys of the good, have derived much additional power and authority from this source.—Will not every real Christian, for instance, bear witness to the power of this sacrament, in strengthening the influence of the Gospel in his own soul? Has not that power been such as to assist in leading some sincere, though mistaken, persons to imagine that the Son of God is personally present at it, and that the bread and wine are actually and physically changed into his body and blood? And will not more enlightened Christians say that there is a charm and an influence connected with this sacred ordinance, of which he is scarcely able to give an account—but of which the effects are such as to induce him to adopt language like that of the man restored to sight by the touch of his Lord: ‘ “ I was blind,” and “ now I see:” I went to that sacrament weak and comfortless; and I returned from it cheered

and strengthened, sanctified and established. The Lord presided at his own feast. I felt his presence, and enjoyed his love.'—The disciples perhaps approached the mount of Transfiguration with many feelings of doubt and alarm; but when they beheld the glory of their Lord, they cried out at once, "It is good for us to be here." And thus the servant of God who devoutly approaches this sacred ordinance. If he has come to it in fearfulness of spirit, he has returned with the song of joy on his lips—"One day in thy courts is better than a thousand;" "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the" proudest "tents of wickedness."

III. But, thirdly, this sacred memorial is valuable AS PROVIDING A PUBLIC TEST OF OUR RELIGIOUS SINCERITY.

There are some, for instance, who by their outward profession of religion might deceive others into a belief of their sincerity, from whom this sacrament assists to tear the mask. Their consciousness of indifference to Christ keeps them from this sacred table, and so exposes their insincerity.

There are others whom this ordinance unmasks to themselves. They might think themselves Christians; but when they feel their inability to come here, they at once discover their deficiencies and their danger.—In thus saying, however, I do not mean to contend that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a test which cannot be violated or abused. I know that there are hardened and careless individuals who pervert it; who prostitute it to the purposes of worldly gain or convenience; who combine with an attendance at the Lord's Supper, habits of vice, or dissipation, or self-indulgence; who press forward, and eat and drink their own condemnation, rather than forfeit their worldly reputation by absenting themselves from this sacred feast.—But then every other test and institution of religion

is liable to similar abuse in the hands of a corrupt world; and thus what is meant for the good of the soul, is too often wrenched to its destruction. To any man, however, of an honest mind, this sacrament is a test of a decisive and valuable nature. If you have fairly contemplated the character of this ordinance, you feel that a life of allowed sin, and an attendance upon it, are incompatible—you continually judge of your state by the spirit of mind in which you are able to approach it—you watch with anxiety its monthly approach, that you may once more bring your minds to the test; that you may judge of the depth of your repentance, your contrition and love, your faith in the perfect sacrifice, and gratitude for the unspeakable love, of your Redeemer. You make it a season of self-examination. You try at this bar the question "whether you are in the faith" or not. You judge by present sensations, in approaching your Redeemer, of the sensations with which you may hope to meet him at the tribunal of God. If dull, or cold, or careless, or merely formal, at his table, you renew your supplications to the throne of God for pardon and grace, for a "clean heart" and "a right spirit." You feel that a closer approach to God has discovered corruptions and deformities of which you were not aware.

IV. In the fourth place, consider the tendency of this ordinance TO INCREASE OUR LOVE OF THAT SAVIOUR TO WHOSE MEMORY IT IS ESPECIALLY DEDICATED.—How tender is the assurance it conveys of his love to a sinful world! It teaches us, not only that he has died for us, but that, in the greatness of his mercy, he has established a memorial by which our faith and love may be constantly deepened and enlarged. He has remembered that we are but dust; that our belief would be easily shaken, our hopes dissipated, and our cheerfulness destroyed. And, tenderly stooping to our infirmities, he has not trusted the re-

collection of the event on which our salvation depends, to our mere memory; but has himself erected an unchanging monument of it. Here, to the eye of faith, he again and again suffers, "the Just for the unjust, that he may bring us to God." Here he is again and again crucified in the presence of his creatures. Whenever we celebrate this solemn rite, we are said to "show forth the Lord's death till he come." That solemn event is placed before us by a sort of scenic representation; is exhibited to the eye, that it may thereby be brought closer to the heart.—How much, then, my brethren, I may repeat, ought this sacrament to endear to us that compassionate Redeemer, who is thus studious of our happiness, and affectionately considerate of the infirmities of our nature; who thus bends over us in tender sympathy, as the parent over his infant child; who thus provides against the sluggishness of our feelings, the waywardness of our hearts, and the shortness of our memories; who thus opposes sensible things to sensible things, and supplies, amidst the objects which surround and detach us from God and holiness, an object to win us back again, and constrain us by a holy violence to love "Him who loved us, and gave himself for us."

V. In the fifth place, how well calculated is this sacred ordinance to HUMBLE THE IMPENITENT SINNER!—In most instances, we see little of the effects or consequences of our sins; but are like men laying a train, and are withdrawn to too great a distance to see its explosion. Many persons, could they see the full results of their irreligion, or sensuality, or dishonesty, or unkindness, would, it may be believed, shrink with horror from the commission of those iniquities which they now perpetrate with indifference.—Here, then, is another most important feature of this sacrament, that it displays, by a most solemn and impressive ceremony, what must be considered as the most terrible of all the

consequences of sin,—the crucifixion of the Son of God. It forces on the memory and mind those effects of iniquity which men are so apt studiously to veil from their eyes.—It is possible, my brethren, that some of those to whom I now address myself are in the habit of thinking lightly of their sins; of judging favourably of their own hearts; and of condemning the language of those ministers of religion who solemnly announce that everlasting punishment of the impenitent to which Scripture so constantly adverts.—Let such individuals approach the cross of the Redeemer, or that solemn festival which is founded upon the fact of his crucifixion. Who, let me ask them, mangled that sacred brow with thorns? who thrust the spear into that sacred side? I answer, It was not merely Pilate, or the executioner, or the Roman soldiers: it was sin—it was your offences and mine, in common with theirs; it was our joint and general transgressions; it was in part some of the very offences which pass without censure in the world, and for which perhaps we ourselves have never heaved a sigh or breathed a prayer. The Saviour has shed his blood for the very acts which have not cost us a tear!—Go, then, thou impenitent and cold-hearted sinner, "look on Him whom" thy sins "have pierced," and seek pardon and grace, before the door of mercy is closed for ever.

VI. But, in the sixth and last place, how strongly is this ordinance calculated to CHEER THE HEART OF THE TRUE BELIEVER!—Even the most compassionate sovereign at length exchanges mercy for wrath, if his subjects continue to rebel against him. And we might naturally fear, that, whatever might be the original compassion of the Lord, the long-continued and aggravated sins of the world must have exhausted it. But, in this sacrament, we have a standing and perpetual memorial of the long-suffering of the God we serve. On that altar is inscribed, by his own hand,

"The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." As the servant of God approaches the altar, he hears a voice saying, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." If sin has spread a momentary cloud between the devout worshipper and his God, still, whilst cast by this sacred ordinance at the feet of his Redeemer, he seems to hear the delightful accents, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee." The harp of prophecy still sounds in his ear the blessed intelligence: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee."

Such, my brethren, is a faint delineation of the value of this holy ordinance in the particular point of view in which I have been anxious this day to contemplate it. But if such be its importance, what shall I say, in conclusion, to those individuals who continue, in spite of these and other considerations of the greatest weight and moment, to refuse an attendance upon it? How ungracious to such persons must be the office which I have been endeavouring to discharge to-day! How earnestly must they have wished me to contend that this solemn rite was of no value; that it reminded us of no mercies and privileges; that it was no memorial of a dying Saviour;—and this because, if these points were established, their neglect of it would admit of some apology! But if the representation which has been given to-day of its value and importance be just and scriptural, then surely, my brethren, such negligence is of the most culpable and alarming character; then am I warranted in urging you, with all the earnestness and solemnity of which I am capable, to renounce the sins which withhold you from this sacred feast; and to make haste and drink this wine here, lest you

never "drink it new in the kingdom of your Father." Am I speaking too strongly, when I affirm, that your present admitted unfitness to partake of this ordinance is a testimony, not to be evaded or resisted, that at present you have neither portion nor lot in the promises of the Gospel. What, then, remains for you, but to seek from God a new heart; to break through the obstacles which detain you from a devout attendance at this sacred table; to "come out from among" the neglecters of it; no longer to touch the "unclean thing;" but to "join yourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten." And more especially would I, to-day, urge this solemn and delightful duty upon the young. Come, you that have not as yet given your heart to another master, come and boldly consecrate yourselves to His service and honour, who is your Father and your Friend; who has "loved you with an everlasting love;" who has "graven" you on the "palms of his hands;" who desires to fold you in his arms, to carry you in his bosom, and to give you in his house, and within his walls, a place and "a name.... an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

To the real servants of God, and devout participators in this holy rite; to the sincere, though perhaps fearful and disquieted, followers of a crucified Master; I may say, in conclusion, this festival is your own by the peculiar appointment of your God. It is especially the feast of the contrite; the table to which the Lord invites the lowly and broken-hearted. That table, my brethren, is now prepared. Your Master is now breaking the bread and pouring out the wine, for the refreshment of his church. Draw near with faith, and take this sacrament to your comfort. Draw near with hope; for where two or three are gathered together in his sacred name, he is there in the midst of them. Draw near with delight; for "in his presence is fulness of joy," and "at his right hand are pleasures for evermore."

SERMON XXIV.

THE GOD OF PEACE.

HEB. xiii. 20, 21.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

In the verses which precede the text, the Apostle has been earnestly soliciting the prayers of the Hebrew converts for himself and his brother Apostles: "Pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly." But he was by no means of a disposition to seek that from others which he was not, to the utmost of his ability, anxious to impart. Accordingly, in the verses now read to you, he himself becomes a supplicant for these same individuals, and, in expressions of the utmost feeling and energy, solicits for them all that could promote their present and eternal interest. How striking and beautiful, my Christian brethren, is that influence of genuine religion which thus disposes men to seek not their own things, but the things of others; which, descending like a sacred fire from heaven, consumes what is base and sordid in our nature, softens down its animosities, and reduces the discordant elements of human society to a harmonious whole!

Let us endeavour, in dependence upon the Divine blessing, to examine the prayer which the Apostle here offers for persons in whom he has so strong an interest. And in so doing I shall notice,

I. THE TITLE BY WHICH THE DIVINE BEING IS HERE DESCRIBED.

II. THE IMPORTANT EVENT WHICH IS ASCRIBED TO HIS AGENCY.

III. THE BLESSINGS FOR WHICH THE APOSTLE ASKS.

IV. THE EXPRESSIONS OF PRAISE WITH WHICH HE APPROACHES THAT SAVIOUR THROUGH WHOM ALONE THESE BLESSINGS CAN BE OBTAINED.

I. And, first, we are to consider THE TITLE BY WHICH THE DIVINE BEING IS HERE DESCRIBED. "May the *God of peace*," it is said, "make you perfect in every good work."

It is, then, under the title and character of "*the God of peace*" that the Apostle, when soliciting blessings upon his friends, loves to contemplate the Creator of the world. And in how delightful a point of view does this title present him to our minds! The war in heaven, by which the rebel angels forfeited for ever their bright inheritance, and sank to the regions where hope and joy can never come, could not be the work of such a God.—Those conflicts of ambition between man and man, which deluge the earth with blood, and whiten it with the bones of human beings, are not his work.—That enmity of the human heart to God, by which multitudes are cut off from present peace and future joy, is not his work.—And, finally, the conflict in our own bosoms between the flesh and the Spirit, between reason and passion, between duty and interest, is not his work. He is the "God of peace;" and nothing that is contentious, turbulent, and disorderly, can have its origin with him.—But, on the contrary, is peace

established between conflicting nations? "*He*," it is said, "maketh peace in thy borders." Is a spirit of harmony diffused over families or neighbourhoods? He is said to be the "God that maketh men to be of one mind in an house." Is a servant of God released from the hostility of those around him? "When a man's ways please the Lord, He," it is said, "makes his enemies to be at peace with him." And, once more, is the heart that has long been living in a state of enmity with God, and suffering all the penalties of so unnatural and horrible a warfare, united to him, and brought to a state of calmness and repose? Of this reconciliation also the God of peace is the "Author and Finisher:" "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places:" "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed." In short, my Christian brethren, all the repose of earth, all the harmony of heaven, all the order of the universe, is the work of the Master we serve. And does not the Apostle, in the text, justly esteem facts such as these an encouragement to prayer? Is it not our wisdom, as well as privilege, when we would seek for peace of conscience, peace in our families, peace in society, to remember that the Most High is a "God of peace;" that contention and hostility are adverse to his nature; that He "is not the author of confusion, but of peace;" that the proper "fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace;" that "the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated." Surely, my brethren, we may encourage you in every season of alarm and disquietude to repose on the protection of a Being so good, so gracious, so paternal; and may breathe for you the wish of St. Paul on another occasion: May "the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing!"

Such, then, is the title here given to God. Let us consider,

II. In the second place, THE IMPORTANT EVENT WHICH IS ASCRIBED, in the text, TO HIS AGENCY. He is there said to have "*brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.*"

We may here notice, first, the Person who was the *subject* of this act of Deity; and then the *act* itself.

The *subject* of this act is described as "the Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant."—The Saviour of the world is often presented to us in Scripture under the image of a "*shepherd:*" "I am the good Shepherd." In the pastoral country of Judea, this metaphor would be peculiarly striking. In all countries it is sufficiently appropriate; being well suited to convey to us a due conception, on the one hand, of the infirmity of man, and, on the other, of the confidence we are invited to repose in the Saviour of the world. How lovely and animating that single expression of the Psalmist, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want!"—In the text, our Redeemer is called the "*great* Shepherd," both as supreme in his general dignity, and as the especial Head of all those shepherds to whom the flock upon earth is committed. He is described also as "the great Shepherd *through the blood of the everlasting covenant;*" that is, as having proved himself to be this "great Shepherd" by the blood which he shed in confirmation of his covenant with his creatures. "The good Shepherd giveth *his life* for the sheep." Can we have a stronger proof that he loves his sheep; that he is deeply interested in their welfare; that he will "never leave them nor forsake them;" that he will suffer none to pluck them out of his hand; than that he should thus have shed his blood to ensure to them the mercies of God?

But, look next at the *nature* of the act ascribed to God in the text. It is, that he hath "*brought again this great Shepherd from the dead;*"—or, in other words, when all the infant church of Christ were scattered on the mountains "as sheep having no shepherd;" when every devout servant of the Cross hung in solemn suspense, or heartless despondency, over the grave of his Lord, God was pleased to revive their hopes, to re-establish their faith, to consummate their joy, by breaking the bars of his grave, and giving back the risen Redeemer to his hopeless people.—The resurrection of Christ, my brethren, is always treated of in Scripture as the great fact on which both the truth and the value of the Gospel may be said to hinge: "If Christ be not risen," says the Apostle, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." The pretensions of the Gospel and the hopes of the Christian may be said to have been deposited in the tomb with our Redeemer; and that all-powerful Hand which "brought again the Lord Jesus from the dead," revived and established them for ever. Our Lord himself evidently considered the simple fact of his resurrection as an all-sufficient pledge and assurance of the happiness of his creatures: "Because I live, ye shall live also;"—"fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death." Thus also the Apostles: "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies:"—"blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to *his abundant mercy*, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." But, such being the case, is it wonderful that St. Paul should encourage himself in prayer by the recollection of this great event? Should not the devout servant of God, even in the moment of deepest alarm and distress, turn to the same topic of encouragement? Compare your circumstances,

my Christian brethren, with those of the first followers of the Redeemer. Are they more trying than those of that hour of desolation when the eleven assembled in the upper room for fear of the Jews? Have your hopes received a heavier blow than theirs? Does a darker cloud hang over your prospects? Is a mightier barrier erected against your progress? Are your friends fewer, or your enemies more numerous, powerful, and malignant? "Christ is risen," and therefore why should the servant of God despair? Why should not every doubt disperse under the beam of the Divine promises?—"Return unto the Lord" with supplication and with tears; and though "he hath torn, he will heal us;" though "he hath smitten, he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." Delightful assurance! What a sunshine does it shed over the path of the Christian! How does it animate us to "hope against hope," and, amidst the heaviest storms of life, enable us to go on our way peaceful and rejoicing!

III. But let us, thirdly, consider for WHAT PARTICULAR BLESSINGS THE APOSTLE PRAYS IN THE TEXT. "May the God of peace," he says, "make *you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.*

It was plainly the object of the Apostle in this instance, to condense into a single sentence every wish which was essential to the welfare of those for whom he prayed. And such is the comprehensiveness of the language here employed, that this object appears to be completely accomplished. We have, for example, the complete *duty* of a Christian,—to do "every good work;"—the *rule* by which all his works must be estimated,—their conformity to "the will" of God;—the *power* by which they are to be wrought,—by

God's "working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight;"—the *manner* in which they are to become acceptable to God,—"through" the sacrifice and intercession of "Jesus Christ."—Let us consider what is involved in this petition, so interpreted.

1. In the first place, the Apostle here desires that the servants of Christ should be distinguished by an anxious endeavour to fulfil "*every good work*."—The religion of the world, my brethren, consists too often in believing little and doing less; in selecting a few easy and fashionable duties, and satisfying ourselves with the most cold and imperfect discharge of them. And even amongst those who profess to be more in earnest in the things of God, how often does an Antinomian spirit—a spirit of high profession and loose practice—discover itself! Ill indeed would such a temper of mind have corresponded with the wish of the Apostle, that the followers of the Cross should be "perfect in every good work!" How evidently was it his conception of religion, that the servants of the Lord should think, feel, speak, and act, as the mortal inhabitants of a mortal world; as men who have "crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts;" as men desirous of filling up the first rude outline of their religious profession with every quality which can adorn our existence here, and fit us for the occupations of the spirits in glory!

2. Again: he prays, that in thus aiming at the accomplishment of "every good work," the followers of Christ may be guided by an implicit reverence for the "*will*" of God.—Various are the rules by which men judge of the character of their own actions. Some are guided by prejudice, some by taste, some by mere authority, some by custom; few, alas! by a simple adherence to the mind of God. My Christian brethren, as, in the infancy of religion, the books of magic were brought together and burned, there comes a day when the thousand systems and theories of thinking

and acting which govern an ungodly world, shall perish in the flame which consumes the elements. But, in the midst of that general conflagration, one law shall stand, and one book survive,—the law and the book of God: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it.... but the word of our God shall stand for ever." "And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

3. In like manner, the Apostle prays, that, in thus labouring to fulfil the will of God, we may look, not to some imaginary fund of holiness within; not to the fancied purity of natural desires, or energy of natural resolution; but to the arm of the Lord, exerted to "*work*" in us those desires and resolutions which "by nature we cannot have." It is considered as essential to the spirit of sound philosophizing, to take no step which is not sanctioned and warranted by experiment. O that men would carry this wholesome rule into religion! For what fact is so established by experiment, as the natural inability of man, without the Holy Spirit of God, to fulfil the will of God? All who have fairly entered the field of duty have felt it. Every hour gives fresh evidence of it. And yet multitudes continue, in the face of this experience, to sink in the gulf of self-confidence. The language of the Almighty with regard to his true servant, is, "I have created him for my glory; I have formed him; yea, I have made him:" "This people have I formed for myself, and they shall show forth my praise." Delightful intelligence, to a heart withering from hour to hour under a sense of its weakness and corruption! The patient scarcely feels his sickness when the physician displays to him some all-sufficient remedy. The child forgets its weakness when it sees the asylum of a parent's bosom opened to it. The disciples, even in the hour of their deepest desolation, were "glad when they saw the Lord." And it is thus with the real and faithful

servant of God, when listening to the tidings we have been now considering. God is the Physician of his soul. God is the Father of the fatherless, and the Saviour of the destitute. Let the language of our hearts be, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation."

4. But, in the last place, the Apostle prays, that every gift of a fallen world to its Creator may be offered "*through Jesus Christ.*"—How incredible it would seem, prior to experience, that any being should be found so confident in his own pretensions, as not anxiously to avail himself of the sacrifice and mediation provided in the Gospel! There is scarcely a human being, to whom the proposition should be made of opening a window in the breast, by which his most secret thoughts, wishes, and feelings should be laid bare, even to the eye of a sinful fellow-creature, but would shrink from the scrutiny. Think, then, my brethren, of exposing the same heart to God; to that terrible scrutiny, before which even the angels veil their faces. Think of being forced, in all the nakedness and deformity of original corruption, under the gaze of Him who hateth iniquity with a perfect hatred. Shall we not joyfully welcome the offers of the Gospel? Shall we not hide ourselves in the mantle of a Saviour's righteousness? Shall we not present every gift of ours to be washed in the Blood of Atonement, and borne in the censer of his merits to the Throne of Glory?

Such is the subject-matter of the prayer of the Apostle; let us,

IV. In the fourth and last place, consider THE DOXOLOGY, or song of praise to the Redeemer, with which the text concludes: "*To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*"

And here I would notice, first, the ground of the

praise which he offers; and, next, the terms of the doxology itself.

1. The *ground of this doxology*, as stated in the text, is the fact to which we have already adverted, that Christ is the only "Mediator between God and man;" and that all we can offer is accepted only "through" him. And does not this consideration invest the Saviour with a dignity and worth in the eyes of a fallen world, which may well call forth from them the loudest songs of gratitude and praise? Does it not teach us, that, without Him, hope must languish, happiness be extinguished, the penalties of God take their free and fearful course, the storm of Divine vengeance sweep over the universe, and its guilty and lost inhabitants, without a single exception, sink into the horrible abodes of interminable wretchedness? We honour a man who has rescued even a single individual from misery: we build monuments to the hero who has emancipated a province: behold in Christ the Deliverer, not of a province, but of uncounted nations; their Deliverer, not from temporal trouble or misery, from the scourge of war or the iron rod of oppression, but from the worm that dieth not, and the fire which is unquenchable; the Saviour of "all who come unto God by him;" and well may we unite, both in the doxology in the text, and the corresponding song of the spirits in glory, "Thou art worthy.... for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

2. But consider, lastly, my brethren, *the nature of the homage thus offered by the Apostle to his crucified Lord.* "*To whom*," it is said, "*be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*"—Of language such as this, how truly may it be affirmed, that it fixes immoveably, and without the possibility of fair dispute, the sovereign dignity of the Being to whom it is addressed! Expresssions similar to these more than once occur in

Scripture; but in no case are they applied except to the God or Saviour of the world. It is addressed, for example, to Him "for whom, and by whom, are all things; to "God the Father;" to "the God of all grace;" to "the only wise God our Saviour;" and it is ascribed, as in the text, not merely to "Him that sitteth upon the throne," but "unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." Can any language, then, be more decisive of the truth, that the Saviour of the world is "very God of very God;" the "Brightness of his" Father's "glory, and the express image of his person?"

But, my brethren, I am anxious, not merely that the truth thus deducible from these words should be fixed in our memories; it is my earnest desire that the same feelings should kindle in our hearts, and the same language breathe from our lips. It is for us also to say "*Amen*" to this tribute of honour to the Redeemer. It is the language of Apostles below; it is the language of Angels above; and it must be your language and mine. We must *wish* the glory of Christ, *pray* for it, *live* for it, and, if need be, *die* for it. The world will live for itself; the "dead" will bury their dead; but the soul, duly affected by the love and mercies of a Saviour, will surrender itself to him; will, with the generous devotion of a free soldier of the Cross, live and die under its awful banner, contending for *His* honour upon earth, in whose presence we hope to rejoice for ever. No man, if a true Christian, "liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; but.... whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." Here, then, my brethren, is the real and legitimate end of our mortal existence. It is not to pursue with feverish haste and disquietude the phantoms of this world's good; it is not to surfeit ourselves with worldly honours and indulgences; but it is to spend and be spent in the service of our Redeemer, and win every day new trophies to his name. The saints of God in heaven and earth are conspiring to raise one vast altar to his

glory. We also are to carry our stone to that altar. We, by our faith, and temper, and practice, are to adorn his doctrine, to set a new seal upon his religion, to glorify him with those bodies and spirits which he has bought with his own blood.

There are two observations with which I shall close our remarks on this copious passage of Scripture.

1. In the first place, it is observable, that it is as "the God of *peace*" the Apostle calls upon the Lord to accomplish this great moral change in the character of his creatures. And, my brethren, the fact is, that holiness is the parent of peace; and that *he* does most for the real harmony of the world who does most for the advancement of its religion. There is, no doubt, an appearance of peace secured in society by a compromise of principle and indifference to truth. But I may say that this is rather a hollow truce than a real pacification. It leaves all the elements of contention behind; and the merest trifle calls them into life and action. Would you have peace in families, in neighbourhoods, or in nations? Give them the bond of common principles. Link them together by devotion to the same object. Carry them to the Cross of the Redeemer, that each may be cured of his own moral deficiencies, and each be endowed with "the mind which was in Christ Jesus." The age of general love to him, will be the age of universal love to each other: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children."—Lord, hasten that glorious period! Let the din of arms no longer be heard in our valleys, or the voice of controversy in thy church. Let Ephraim no more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim. Let the voice from Calvary, which cried aloud, "Father, forgive them," hush every harsh feeling and expression of thy creatures to rest; and let every man forgive his brother, as he hopes to be forgiven of Thee!

2. In the last place, observe, my Christian brethren, from the text, what is the real character of Christian "*perfection.*"—It is not to be sought in the mere persuasion of our own safety, in a state of feverish excitement or of diseased sensibility; but in eager desires and endeavours, through the grace of God, to accomplish the little which is possible to us, and an implicit reliance upon the Redeemer to accomplish all that is impossible. The perfection of angels is a state of entire conformity to the will of God: the perfection of men is the constant and devout pursuit of that conformity. How lofty, then, my Christian brethren, is the object which is proposed to you as the servants of a crucified Saviour! How little leisure does it allow for the multiplied follies of life! How justly may we urge upon those who would bring us down to the great level of indolence or worldly dissipation, which they themselves occupy, the language of Nehemiah, 'We are "doing a great work, so that we cannot come down. Why should the work cease whilst we leave it, and come down to you?" ' Would to God that this necessity for vigour in prayer, in watchfulness, in action, were incessantly felt!—that we considered 'nothing done whilst any thing remained undone!'—that every day saw the vineyard of the soul better cleansed of its weeds, fenced from the world, and planted with the trees of the Lord! Christian brethren, there is but a step between us and eternity. The day is declining, the shadows are lengthening, and the night cometh in which no man can work. I speak as a man standing on the edge of the grave, to those standing in the same awful circumstances. The death-note which is pealing from day to day, and which proclaims the summons of another spirit to the tribunal of the Lord, assures us that the original curse is not repealed, and that we also must stand at the judgment-seat of God. I hear a voice from heaven, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee

light." Let us obey the call; let us live as men who are looking for the coming of the Lord; let us stand with our loins girt and our lamps burning, that when the cry is heard, "The Bridegroom cometh," we may arise and enter in with him before the door is shut for ever.

SERMON XXV.

THE WORLD PREPARED FOR THE CHRISTIAN.

JOHN xiv. 2.

I go to prepare a place for you.

THE sailor, as he is traversing the waste of waters, is not satisfied to think merely of the turbulent and fluctuating element that sustains him, but looks forward to the moment when he shall see the white cliffs of his country, and once more plant his foot on the firm soil of the land that he loves. We also, my brethren, are navigators, voyaging on the rough ocean of life: and he judges but ill for his own welfare or happiness, who confines his view within the narrow circumference of our present horizon. There is a world beyond the grave, to which we are invited—a world of repose, of holiness, of stability, of ineffable bliss—prepared for the servants of God. Shall we not, amidst the tossings of this sea of existence, continually look forward, and cheer our souls with the contemplation of the unchangeable joys and glories of our Father's kingdom? It is to this employment that our short but emphatical text calls us on the present occasion. May God give us grace simply and devoutly to obey the call; and may we, by a due improvement of the opportunity, be afresh incited and animated to aspire after an ultimate participation in this heavenly inheritance! Almost every

word of the text will be found to contain some valuable and consolatory suggestion to the devout follower of Christ. "I go to prepare a place for you."

I. In the first place, WHO IS IT THAT REPRESENTS HIMSELF AS THUS INTERESTED IN THE CONCERNS OF MANKIND? It is said in the text—"*I* go to prepare a place for you."

It is no less a Person, therefore, than the Son of the Most High God—that Son who "thought it no robbery to be equal with God." And consider, my Christian brethren, what is involved in such a statement. How high an estimate would be formed of the tenderness of a human being who chose rather to endure the severest trials than to suffer the mere insect in his path to be exposed to them! But is it not obvious, that *any* two finite things more closely approximate than finite and infinite? that all the generations of creatures have infinitely more points in common, than the creature and the Creator? and that, therefore, the disparity between the insect and the man is far less than between man and his Redeemer? And yet *He*, "without whom was not any thing made that was made," has thus sympathized in the trials of mankind; has thus lived, and suffered, and died for a guilty world: "has thus given himself, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "*I* go to prepare a place for you."—His trials and degradation were now indeed soon to come to a conclusion. But consider, for a moment, the steps by which he had approached to this point of his history. Consider the number and acuteness of his trials; the destitution, insults, and mockery; the agony of the garden, and the sufferings of the cross;—contemplate the awful moment when the heart-rending exclamation was forced from him, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—call to mind, that all these sufferings were inflicted upon a nature of the most exquisite sensibility; and then remember, that it was for man—

for man, fallen, guilty, depraved, and lost—that it was for such a creature the Lord of Glory suffered and died! —Is not this, my brethren, a contemplation which ought deeply to affect the mind? Ought not devout amazement to seize every thought, and prompt us to ask, in the language of the Psalmist, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

II. But I come, secondly, to consider what is more expressly INCLUDED IN THE EXPRESSION, "I *go* to prepare a place for you."

There are a variety of reflections which this single word suggests; but I wish to confine your attention to one or two particulars.

1. In the first place, this word may assist to refute the notion of those who conceive that the heaven which is to succeed this state of being is merely another stage of earthly or material existence, in which our Lord is himself to preside, and, by the mighty energy of his power, to convert the new earth, or the old earth new refitted, into a region of holiness and joy. There has been, as it appears to me, a degree of tampering with Scripture upon this point, which has largely tended to disturb the comfort of weak or wavering individuals. —"I *go* to prepare a place." Surely this expression seems decisively to indicate that *this* world is not the place where our Lord will provide for the future happiness of his creatures; that he has fixed the abodes of the blest in other quarters of existence, and destined them to a different mode of being; that, although we read of bodies, of cities and walls, of trees and rivers, in the celestial paradise, we are to consider these simply as images constructed with a just reference to the nature of man, and especially of fallen man—the creature of sense, and therefore to be addressed mainly through the senses. Admit that it is difficult to reconcile figures such as these with our conceptions of

spiritual existence; may not these conceptions themselves be grossly inaccurate; or may there not be some new mode of existence—a mode at once shutting out the possibilities of transgression, and securing the perfection of love, obedience, and devotion? How essential is it, my Christian brethren, to remember, that the disciple who had been admitted to a vision of the world of spirits, was satisfied to describe it rather by negation, than by any distinct analysis of its glories, beauties, and joys: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Let us not "rush in," where the more enlightened "fear to tread;" but leave that which is behind the veil to be disclosed by the lustre of the Great Day.

In like manner, how explicitly is this single word of the text opposed to the still grosser and more obviously unscriptural conception of heaven, which represents its pleasures and occupations as nearly the same as those of earth; which supposes a change of nature superfluous; and madly conceives that a fallen and corrupt creature may pass from this world to another, unconverted and unsanctified, and there dwell in the presence of God and the Lamb, and drink of the river of celestial pleasures for evermore! If there be a single individual among us who has fancied to himself this sort of Mohammedan paradise; who imagines that unbelief, or ungodliness, or worldliness, or dissipation, may find their appropriate sphere and enjoyments in the world of glory; that heaven is another scene of sordid indulgences or sensual delights; let him ask himself whether the expression in the text, to which our attention is now called, does not, in concurrence with many other passages of Scripture, lead inevitably to the conclusion, that the heaven of Scripture is not another earth; that it is not a region connected with it, or assimilated to it; that it does not belong to the same system of worlds, or the same mode of existence? Few errors will be

found, I believe, to conduct more individuals to perdition, than these low and sensual conceptions of heaven. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new:" "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." Such is the language of Scripture: and is it not a legitimate inference from this language, that, if we die in our corruptions, we must sink to the world of the corrupt—to the region where perfect wickedness is, as it always will be, combined with perfect misery; where God is known only as a "consuming fire;" and where "the smoke of the pit ascendeth for ever?"

III. But I come, thirdly, to consider the expression, "I go to prepare a PLACE."

And here, in order to ascertain *the nature of that place* to which our Lord has thus ascended, let us ask for intelligence from one of those happy spirits who are already admitted to participate in its glories, and he will reply to us. Is the question, for instance, "Are the inhabitants of that region of bliss cleansed from their guilt?" the reply is, "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." —"Are they holy?" "They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple."— "Are they happy?" "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."—What a world, my brethren, to contemplate and to live for! You that have trembled under the sense of guilt, think of having your case pleaded by the great Advocate; your acquittal pronounced; your transgressions cast into the depths of the sea; your name indelibly written in the book of life.—You that have been nigh to faint in the struggle

with corruption, think of being clothed for ever in the white garments of a spotless, unchangeable righteousness.—You that have felt the mutability of all earthly things, think of a state of which it is said, "They shall go no more out."—You that linger on from hour to hour, in doubt as to the final victory, think of grasping the "palm" and wearing the "crown of life;" and of hearing the transporting invitation, "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord!"—You that have hitherto found the path of religion a solitary path, few perhaps to commend, and fewer to assist; think of finding yourself in a world where all are holy; where your eyes, instead of searching in vain for the faithful and devoted servants of the Cross, shall behold them forming a company which "no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues;" and where, in this glorious company, you shall find a band of associates sympathizing in your joys, animating your confidence, kindling your devotions, and deepening your chorus of gratitude and adoration to your Redeemer and your God. You, if sincere disciples of the Cross, have "come" already "unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven." You are united to myriads who have escaped the flood of destruction; have landed on the mountain of the Lord; and who there see his face, and share his happiness. They feel no pang; they fear no decay; they behold around the Throne an unchanging bow, which assures them that the tempest of ruin shall never descend, and that the covenant of their peace shall endure for ever.

IV. But consider, next, what is meant by the declaration of our Lord, that he is gone to PREPARE this place for his disciples: "I go to *prepare* a place."

1. And here, first, he is gone to *make ready such a world as is best suited to the state and capacity of his*

glorified creatures.—And how cheering, my Christian brethren, is such a persuasion! It adds much to our satisfaction, in this state of being, to know that some dear and intimate friend has prepared the abode in which we are to dwell. We remember that he is familiar with our tastes and habits, and are sure that his large and liberal hand will spare nothing that may contribute to our happiness. Consider, then, the fact which is recorded in this expression of our text. Not only is the world of glory the "palace of the great King;" not only is it the garden of the Lord, and therefore adapted to the nature of its great Proprietor; but it is an abode constructed by one familiar with your own nature, wants, and capacities, devised by the mind and formed by the hand of Him who loved you and gave himself for you. He built the heavenly temple; he called the river of life from its everlasting fountains: he planted the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations: and, when nothing of created objects remained to add splendour or worth to this invisible world, he added Himself, as the proper joy of his creatures, to that bright habitation. "I go to prepare a place for you." I go, *myself*, to shine in that temple; to walk by those fountains; to dwell in those mansions; and in my presence shall there be fulness of joy, and at my right hand pleasures for evermore.—Reflect, then, ye who already find your chief consolation in the occasional glimpses granted to you of the glories and mercies of the God you serve; reflect on the joy of maintaining with him an intimate and unchanging intercourse, and of rejoicing for ever in the beam of his immediate presence. Your Redeemer has entered that world as our forerunner; has taken possession of it for his servants; has established his own throne in it; has given us a right of entrance to it; has prepared the steps of your ascent; and will finally establish you with himself in unchangeable happiness and glory. You may, in this stage of being, be poor,

or desolate, or afflicted; the world may scarcely know of your existence, or may know you only to despise or condemn you: but if you are faithful to this ascended Lord, you shall enter those regions of bliss, and drink of the rivers of everlasting enjoyment, and feed on the fruit of immortality in the paradise of God.

V. But, in the fifth and last place, FOR WHOM IS THE HEAVENLY ABODE PREPARED? "I go," it is said, "to prepare a place for *you*."

And who, my Christian brethren, are the individuals thus distinguished by their Lord? Let the man of the world reply, and he may be disposed to say, "For the high or the learned, for the poet, or the orator, or the conqueror of hostile millions;" for it is at their feet that the world ordinarily casts her honours. Nor would the reply in every instance be inaccurate. In not a few cases, rank, and learning, and genius, are "justified of" their "children," and the highest in earthly distinctions are the highest in the favour of God. But how frequent are the exceptions to this rule! In how many instances are we almost constrained to forebode that the scriptural denunciation will be fulfilled, and "the first will be last!" Many, it is to be feared, who have been flattered when living, and whose poor remains, proudly decorated with the sad memorials of the mutability of all human things, have been followed by sorrowing thousands to the grave, will, because impenitent and unholy, sink from the high seats of worldly distinction to the deep and dreadful dungeon of eternal infamy and wretchedness. It is not difficult to fancy such an individual, the palm of earthly honour in his hand, and its laurels wrapped around his brow, passing from the silent tomb to the bar of everlasting judgment, and there claiming for himself, among the spirits of the blessed, as by a sort of natural right, the distinctions so long freely conceded to him on earth. But, alas! how awful the reverse! Follow that haughty

spirit a step farther in his eternal career. Behold the judgment set and the books opened, the witnesses assembled, and the Ancient of Days enthroned amidst all the glories of the Godhead, to fix the everlasting destinies of his creatures. I hear the trumpet of the Archangel, and the sentence of the Lord against the impenitent, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

But where, during this awful transaction, during the solemn silence and the general "hush of feeling" which may be conceived to succeed it; where is the despised individual on whom this flattered, but criminal, individual perhaps trampled in his path to victory and renown? If he was a believer in Christ; if he was the lowly, simple, affectionate, obedient disciple of the Cross; if, from his pallet of straw, he was accustomed to lift the prayer of faith and love to the Throne of Compassion; his toils and his sorrows are over; he is "accepted in the Beloved;" he takes his place amidst the dominions and principalities of heaven; he drinks of the living fountains of water, and triumphs in the presence of God through all eternity. Even upon earth the voice of the Redeemer had often gently whispered to his aching heart, "I go to prepare a place for you;" and now he actually sees that place, and the Gracious Master who prepared it, and enters for ever into the joy of his Lord.

In how important a point of view, my Christian brethren, do considerations such as these place the principles and duties of religion! "I die daily," is the language of St. Paul. And the real wisdom of every man is, in thought, to die every hour; to bring death close to him; to look through the flimsy partition which separates him from the world to come; to rehearse, in the chambers of the mind, the judgment of the great day; to look anxiously to his state of preparation, to the foundation of his hopes, and to the security of his happiness. God grant, that, when the cry

of the last Advent is heard, and when the very dead shall start from their graves, all to whom I am speaking may, in the confidence of holy trust in the merits and compassion of a Saviour, be enabled to "lift up their heads with joy," because their "redemption draweth nigh!"

There are two considerations which, in concluding our examination of this subject, I would be permitted to urge upon you.

1. In the first place, let me remind you, from the words of the text—"I go to prepare a place for you"—that the Saviour of the world is still employed for the benefit of his people; and that he will not cease from his labours of love till he has placed his true and attached followers in the mansions thus made ready to receive them. But, my brethren, if the love of our Redeemer to his disciples was not confined to the few years of his mortal existence; if in quitting this earthly abode he did not abandon his real followers; if "he ever liveth to make intercession" for them, and to distribute among them the rich "gifts" of his providence and his grace; then must your love also, and faith, be permanent, and ever vigorous.—It is not enough to have once devoted yourself to his service: you must fulfil the vow. It is not enough to have formed a hasty resolution, to have offered a sudden prayer, or, in some burst of transient feeling, to have proclaimed your gratitude and affection to your God and Saviour. We ask of you durable and unwavering faith, love, and conformity to his will. We ask of you a love active and unwearied as his own;—a love which meets blessings perpetually renewed with a gratitude perpetually fervent; which, as a "salient and living spring," pours forth ceaseless streams of devotion. Zeal and religion, in our case, must not be the mere creature of impulse, or sentiment, or immediate impression; but of conscience and principle. It must not, like the me-

teor, flash for a moment and be seen no more; but shine, like the sun in the firmament, for ever and ever.

2. In the last place, I cannot but press upon you the recollection, that if our Lord is thus "preparing a place" for his creatures, it is essential that those creatures also be prepared for the world so allotted to them. Imagine, my Christian brethren, the region of the blest to contain all that would regale the eye, the ear, and the taste; and what would be its value to a visitant who had not the full use of these different senses? And, in like manner, suppose it to contain all that can satisfy the spiritual discernment, and tastes, and desires; what would be its attractions to an individual in whom these graces of the Spirit did not exist? There must be a preparation on earth answerable to the preparation in heaven; a preparation of the inhabitant for the place, as well as of the place for the inhabitant. The future citizen of heaven is not to be merely a corrupt sinner, or a worldling lifted from earth, and forcibly introduced into the house of many mansions; but a being purged of his corruptions, and fitted for the world which nothing impure may enter. Behold, then, the high and difficult attainments which call for your constant prayers, and watchfulness, and labour. You are, under God, to "put off the old man, and put on the new;" to cast away the slough of original corruption, and be clothed in the white garment of the sanctuary.—What inhabitant of a land of civilization and refinement, who found himself for a season thrown among rude and savage tribes, would be satisfied to adopt their coarse and barbarous habits? Would he not rather remember, that he was soon to enter the circles of civilization and gentleness, and strive to fit himself for acting his part in this nobler sphere? Such, my brethren, are your circumstances as Christians. If you are the real followers of the Lord of life and glory, a very short period must carry you to the heavenly city —the city made without hands; to the immediate pre-

sence of God and of his angels. "Your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Strive, then, to think and act under the full influence of this high destiny. Live as probationers for the world of spirits—as creatures deposited for a moment here, but designed to spend eternity in heaven. Say, to such as would wean you from sublimer pursuits to those occupations or indulgences which do not satisfy their hearts, and would still less satisfy yours, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Labour to keep the world of realities, of durable riches, and of everlasting triumphs, constantly before you. And may the "God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

END OF VOL. II.

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